COMPLETE WORKS OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Vol. V

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

(in America, U.S.A.)

COMPLETE WORKS
OF
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

VOLUME V

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH
19-B, RAJA RAJKRISHNA STREET
CALCUTTA • INDIA
1958

Published by
SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA,
General Secretary
The Ramakrishna Vedanta Math
19-B, Raja Rajkrishna Street, Calcutta-6

This Deluxe Binding is distributed by
The Standard Literature Co. (P) Ltd.
Calcutta • New Delhi • Bombay • Madras

Printed by
PRABHAT CHANDRA ROY
Sri Gouranga Press Private Ltd.,
5, Chintamani Das Lane, Calcutta-9

ABOUT THIS COMPLETE WORKS

FIFTH VOLUME

We now offer to the public the fifth volume of the COMPLETE WORKS OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA, published on the occasion of the Swami Abhedananda Centenary Celebration, 1966-1967. This volume contains memorable lectures on the Life and Teachings of the Great Saviours of the World—"Great Saviours of the World", the Life and Teachings of the Saint of Dakshineswar—"Memoirs of Ramakrishna", His Sayings and Parables—"Sayings of Ramakrishna" and the Swami's regardful tribute to his beloved spiritual brother, Swami Vivekananda—"Swami Vivekananda and His Works".

"Memoirs of Ramakrishna" is an abridged form of the entire "Sri Ramakrishna-Kathamrita" by "'M" or Master Mahasaya and it has been newly and independently translated by Srimat Swami Abhedananda. Some new materials have been added in the last book, "Swami Vivekananda and His Work". And it is to note that all the lectures, contained in the volume, have been carefully edited and Prefaces have been added in the books for giving an outline or gist of the entire discussions on subjects included in respective books.

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA
General Secretary,
Swami Abhedananda Centenary
Celebration.

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DEDICATED

TO THE

LOTUS FEET

OF THE

GREAT SAVIOURS OF ALL NATIONS

" O Lord ! As rivers rising from different mountains run crooked or straight toward one ocean, so all special religions, rising from various standpoints, run crooked or straight toward Thee—the Infinite Ocean of Existence, Intelligence, Bliss and Love."

PREFACE

The Great Saviours of the World was delivered serially in the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences of New York sometimes from 1907 to 1911 before the talented audience of America. The word 'saviour' has been used here in its broad and universal sense, which should not be confounded with the orthodox Christian conception of a saviour who saves the sinners from the eternal perdition.

The principal aim and object of these recordful and illuminative lectures are to show that the fundamental teachings or sayings of the founders of all great religions of the world have had the same religious and spiritual keynotes and that the stories and annals, connected with the eventful divine lives and miraculous deeds are analogous. Furthermore it has been demonstrated in this volume that the universal religion of Vedanta embraces the teachings of all the saviours of the world and it harmonizes all other sectarian religions or religious creeds. It is to note further that the short sketches of the lives of the saviours, included in this volume, are based upon the authentic historical records and accounts, gathered by different scholars from various sources.

Now it can be asked as to what is the utility of the lives and teachings of the teachers or saviours? To this it can be said that though all men are possessed of intelligence and discriminative faculty, yet they are not fully manifested in all, for which men cannot discriminate the real from the unreal and, in most cases, they fall short of their real vision and right knowledge and are consequently liable to suffer. So they need some mediums or means which will help them and direct them to the right path. The saviours are like the guiding stars that lead all towards right destination. The saviours and the messengers of God are the bright examples before the world, and if men follow them and follow the ennobling thoughts and deeds of the saviours, they can mould their lives and characters which will enlighten them and rescue them from the den of delusion.

The Great Saviours of the World contains eleven illuminat-

ing recordful chapters dealing with divine lives and teachings of Sri Krishna, Zoroaster, Lao-Tze, Gautama Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and Ramakrishna. In the chapter I, an introductory discussion has been given to show that Divinity dwells on the topmost crest of the spiritual wave of humanity. Whoever reaches the summit, is transformed by that self-effulgent light from a human into a divine being, and is regarded as a God-man, a divine messenger, or a saviour of the world. Swami Abhedananda says that, according to Vedanta, the universe moves in cycles of wave forms, and these waves of evolution rise, reach their zenith, and gradually subside to rise again in the form of another wave. This cycle of evolution is to be found in the physical, mental, moral or ethical and spiritual planes of the universe. If we study the history of humanity, we will find that nation after nation has risen, reached the climax of progress of culture and civilization, and has gradually passed into oblivion, making room for others to rise. But always we notice that on the highest plane of spiritual evolution of mankind, there is a shining and guiding soul, a prophet, a saviour, or a divine incarnation.

All the saviours or prophets are recognized as the divine messengers of God the merciful, and all of them are commissioned by the Almighty to deliver their messages to the people among whom they live. They are adorned with good and uncommon qualities and powers, and they do everything for the good of humanity, establish righteousness, and destroy evil. Swami Abhedananda says that for the need of time and the people, Sri Krishna came as a saviour among the Hindus. About 660 B.C. the prophet Zoroaster appeared among the Iranians, the ancient inhabitants of Persia and preached among the people the spiritual teachings. About the same time there arose in China, Lao-Tze and Confucius. In India, there came another great saviour in the form of Gautama Buddha and founded the Buddhistic faith. Until six hundred years after Jesus the Christ, Mohammed appeared as a prophet of Islam and gave the Arabian people the gospel of truth. About the same time, the Hindus need a re-adjustment or a re-establishment of an universal truth and there appeared, in South India, Sankaracharya and Ramanuja, and in North India, Sri Chaitanya. There came also as the messengers and commentators Madhva,

Nimvarka, Vallabha and others. Now, these great ones are recognized as the prophets, messengers, incarnations or saviours of the humanity. As for example, the Swami says that Moses, Confucius and Mohammed are called as the prophets of the Lord, Zoroaster and Lao-Tze as the messengers of God, and Sri Krishna, Gautama Buddha, Christ, Sankaracharya and Sri Ramakrishna are classed as the saviours of the world. But each of them had a divine mission, and each one set an example of purity, unselfishness, divine wisdom and disinterested love for all.

Swami Abhedananda has raised in this connection a question as to who is the real or true preacher of universal religion. He has said that each prophet or messenger is commissioned by God as the true preacher, because each one of them was an embodiment of Divinity. But when we will think anyone as a preacher of any religion, we must judge from our common sense, or from our reasoning faculty, about his ability and fitness of a preacher. The Swami says that the real preacher of the universal religion is one who has seen God and realized God, the Absolute in his divine feeling and who really lives the life of a God-man. But such a man or preacher is very rare. "If you ask me whether I have seen God, I will answer: 'He that hath seen the Son, hath also seen the Father'. The latest manifestation of Divinity was in the form of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Him I have seen, therefore, I have seen God, and through Him, I have realized Buddha, Christ, Chaitanya, Krishna and other great prophets and saviours". Here Swami Abhedananda has reminded us of the truth or divine promise of Sri Ramakrishna: 'He who was Rama and Krishna, is now incarnated as Ramakrishna'.

In the second chapter, the Swami has discussed about the uncommon life and teachings of Sri Krishna who sang a universal song of the *Bhagavad Gita* in the battle of Kurukshetra in the epic age. The life of Sri Krishna was historical as the life of Jesus the Christ. Swami Abhedananda has forwarded here various references and evidences in support of the historic city of Sri Krishna, and has quoted, in this connection, Prof. Lassen, Captain Wilford, Authur Lily, Sir William Jones, Sir Godfrey Higgins, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Prof. Bhandarkar, Dr. W. H. Mill and others. He has also depicted a mytho-

historical picture of Sri Krishna quoting references from the *Mahabharata,* the *Harivamsha,* the *Puranas,* and the *Bhagavad Gita.* Regarding Sri Krishna's unparalleled character and sayings, the Swami says that in the life of Krishna, there is to be remarked a most wonderful combination of both divine and human qualities. Sri Krishna showed by his actions that noble qualities reached perfection in him. "Nowhere do we find another example of perfect embodiment of all moral, spiritual and godly attributes which were manifested in the character of Krishna. * * No other incarnation, neither Buddha, nor Christ, can take the place of Krishna, because neither of them could harmonize God and the world, and neither of them could set as highest an example in social, political, ethical and spiritual ideals as was done by this world-redeemer (Krishna)". Sri Krishna as an expounder of the *Bhagavad Gita* established the fatherhood of one omnipotent personal God, and taught peace, charity, and love for humanity. He taught a synthetic *sadhana* which harmonized Yoga, Karma, Jnana and Bhakti and removed all the antagonistic ideas in the field of religio-philosophical thoughts of India.

In the third chapter, Swami Abhedananda deals with life and teachings of Zoroaster, the prophet of the ancient Iranians. Zoroaster lived about 6,000 B.C., and others maintain that he was born in Bactria about 12,000 B.C. The Swami says that his actual historical time cannot be earlier than the middle of the seventh century B.C. Zoroaster was a direct descendant of the real line of the house of Manuschcihar. His father's name was Pourushaspa and mother's name was Dughdhova, and it is said that his native place was the district of Atropatene or Adarbaijan.

Zoroastrianism, as preached by Zoroaster, teaches that Ahura Mazda created man and gave him his body and mind. Man cannot do anything alone by his will and intellect without the grace of the Lord. Zoroastrianism is a religion of absolute faith, implicit confidence and unswerving devotion to Ahura Mazda. The Swami says that it is like the Bhakti Yoga or the path of devotion in the dualistic phase of the universal religion of Vedanta. It teaches constant prayers, offerings, sacrifices and thanksgiving by the devotee to the Lord.

The fourth chapter deals with the life and teachings of

Lao-Tze. In China, three religions or religious faiths are predominant and they are Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Confucianism and Taoism were indigenous, while Buddhism was introduced from India in the year 65 A.D. The prophets like Confucius and Lao-Tze were the founders of the religions of Confucianism and Taoism. Both of these prophets lived at the same time in sixth century B.C. These two prophets are regarded as Krishna and Buddha of India, and their religions imbibed the spirit of India to some extent. The teachings of Lao-Tze are contained in the book which he wrote himself in the sixth century B.C. The name of his book was Tao-Teh-King, given by the Emperor Ching of the Han Dynasty (156-143 B.C.). The term 'Tao' connotes the idea of 'The Way', and some are of opinion that Tao means the Eternal Word or 'Logos' or the 'Eternal Being'. Again some call it the 'Reason' or 'Nature'. The Buddhists use the term 'Tao' as an embodiment of enlightenment. But the literary meaning of the word 'Tao' is the 'Way' or 'Method' which leads men to divine light or enlightenment.

Lao-Tze taught that Tao is one and unique, and is immutable and eternal. It is nameless and indescribable like the Brahman of Advaita Vedanta. Lao-Tze called it the mysterious abyss of existence (*satta*) and is, therefore, the mother or matrix of the world appearance. It existed before God, and therefore it created God which is known in Vedanta as *Isvara,* the personal God or the *saguna* Brahman, the first and causal manifestation of the Brahman. Swami Abhedananda says that as in Advaita Vedanta the individualized soul is known as the *jivatman,* so Tao or the Way of Heaven, when individualized, is known as the Way of Man, but, in truth, or in essence, the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man are one and the same. The *Tao-Teh-King,* written by Lao-Tze, says that man takes law from the earth, the earth takes law from the Heaven, the Heaven takes law from the Tao, and Tao takes its law what it is in itself. There Tao is not merely an abstract principle, but is the object of awe and reverence. Swami Abhedananda says that as the Brahman, or the Absolute, is the cornerstone of philosophy and religion of Vedanta, so Tao, the Absolute and eternal One is the fundamental principle of philosophy and religion of Lao-Tze. Tolstoi was greatly in-

fluenced by the religious and philosophical ideas or thoughts of Lao-Tze. In fact, Lao-Tze's religion, Taoism did not begin to be a popular religion until after the introduction of Buddhism in China, and it is a fact that Taoism borrowed many things from Buddhism. As for example, like Buddhism, the modern Taoism incorporated the Triratna of the Buddhists, Buddha, Dharma and Samgha, which took the names of the Perfect Holy One, the Highest Holy One and the Greatest Holy One. Like Buddhism, Taoism had its monks and nuns who wore yellow caps. It also borrowed from Buddhism the ideas of a Purgatory and of reward and punishment after death, as also the idea of rebirth or reincarnation. But Lao-Tze believed in the immortality of the soul, and said that realization of the Tao through self-conquest or self-control is the attainment of salvation or *mukti.*

In the fifth chapter, Swami Abhedananda deals with life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. The word 'Buddha' implies the idea of 'Divine Enlightenment' or 'Wisdom', and Gautama Siddhartha was named after Buddha when he attained to divine wisdom through severe penance. Buddha's father was King Shuddhodana and mother's name was Maya Devi, the daughter of Suprabuddha. In the year 624 B.C., on the day of the full moon in the month of Vaisakha, while in the garden of Lumbini, under a satin tree, Maya Devi gave birth to a perfect child who was afterwards known as the saviour Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

Prince Siddhartha renounced his home and hearth and became the Sannyasin at the age of twentynine. Swami Abhedananda writes: "Shakya Muni Bodhisattva parted from Bimbisara as a friend and went out of Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha, in search of remedy for misery, sorrow, disease and death which prevailed in the world. He went to Vaisali and placed himself under the spiritual guidance of a great Brahmin philosopher Arada Kalama who had a large number of followers. He belonged to the *Sankhya* school of Kapila and laid great stress on the belief in a permanent and eternal Soul, the *Atman*". Arada Kalama taught Bodhisattva that the goal of perfect freedom and immortal life is reached in this path. But Bodhisattva found no satisfaction in this path or doctrine. So he left Arada Kalama and placed himself under the

guidance of another Brahmin teacher, Udraka Ramaputra who belonged to the *Vaiseshika* school of Kanada. He accepted the truth of law of *karma* and analyzed the *skandas* that construct the stuff of personality. But this doctrine did not give him satisfaction, and so he went to the temple priests and asked them the way of salvation. His gentle and compassionate heart was horrified at the sight of the cruel sacrifice of the innocent animals on the altars of the gods for the expiation of sins. He believed in the creed of non-killing and *ahimsa*. He then went in search of a better system of spiritual practice towards Uruvela, the modern Bodh Gaya. There in the jungle of Uruvela he met five Bhikshus, headed by Kaundinya, who were the disciples of Udraka. Bodhisattva was pleased to see their penance and severe austerity for controlling desires and passions. He also took the vow of that penance and for six years he continued to torture his body without food and clothes. His body was gradually reduced to skeleton, but he did not find any real peace and happiness in that severe austerity. He was so weak that he was unable to move his legs and limbs, and came to know that it is not the right path to get into real salvation. He then took hold of a tree nereby and tried to raise himself up, but he fell down and was unconscious for a long time. At this time Sujata happened to pass by the spot where Bodhisattva was swooned. She offered Bodhisattva the rice-milk or *payasa,* which he ate and felt strong enough to come back to his seat of penance. He then selected the middle path (*madhyama pantha*) and absorbed himself in deep meditation under the shade of the Bodhi tree. At this time he was tempted by Mara, the embodiment of desires and passions, and he successfully conquered it, and sat cross-legged under the Bo-tree on the banks of the Niranjana and attained Nirvana or the cessesion of desires which is really the attainment of permanent tranquil peace. Such is the story of Buddha's attainment of Nirvana, and Swami Abhedananda has described it graphically while dealing with the life of the saviour, Gautama Buddha.

After attaining to *sambuddhatva,* Bodhisattva Buddha realized his own religion which was founded upon the four noble truths, and he preached them to the world. His *sambuddhatva* contained the central idea of Nirvana which was positive

and not negative. Swami Abhedananda has described the basic ideas of the four noble truths which really lead to Nirvana. The first noble truth is the existence of suffering and sorrow. The second noble truth is the cause of suffering. The third noble truth is cessation of sorrow which means the state of Nirvana. The fourth noble truth is attached with the eight-fold path that also lead to Nirvana. The eight-fold path is (1) right comprehension, (2) right resolution, (3) right speech, (4) right acts, (5) right way of earning a livelihood, (6) right efforts, (7) right thoughts, (8) right state of peaceful mind.

Swami Abhedananda says that religion, preached by Buddha, may be said to be an outgrowth of the *Sankhya* philosophy, as expounded by Kapila. Regarding the conception of Nirvana, the Swami says that after the death of Buddha and his direct disciples, the difficulty of understanding what he really meant by Nirvana, was felt keenly by his latter followers than ever before. So there arose different controvertial meanings or interpretations of Nirvana. The Swami has discussed those different interpretations, and has said that Nirvana really expresses the idea of suchness or thatness (*tathata*), and that ever-existent thatness is like the *Atman* of the *Upanishad*. But Buddha himself has not said anything about the nature of Nirvana, as he kept absolute silence during his *parinirvana*.

In the sixth chapter, Swami Abhedananda deals with life and teachings of Christ. In fact, he has devoted four chapters on discussions on Christ and they are: *Christ and his Teachings, Christ and Christmas, Vedanta and the Teachings of Jesus* and *Did Christ teach a new Religion*. The Swami says that in the fulness of time, the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary took place and on the 25th of December Christ was born in Bethlehem. Christ was the only begotten Son of the Heavenly Father. This version has been given by the Matthew, but the Luke narrator has given a different version. In the Apocryphal Gospel, various miracles of Jesus have been described, and these miracles were played by Jesus when he was twelve years old. The life of Jesus was unknown when he was eighteen years old. When he was about thirty years old he was baptised and the Holy Ghost descended from the heaven in the shape of a dove and said: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. Then he appeared before the public. When he was

preaching in Jerusalem, he was betrayed by one of his disciples. He instituted the memorial supper, and then he was crucified, having made a full confession of his Messiahship before Pontius Pilate. After three days he resurrected and appeared alive before his disciples.

The Swami says that Jesus proved to the world by his glorious works that he was the embodiment of purity and righteousness and that he was the personification of divine wisdom and powers. The disinterested love for humanity, shown by Jesus, was unique. He really accepted the ideal of Vedanta, and lived the life of a Yogi (the Swami has discussed in his book, *How to be a Yogi* that Christ practised the yogic *sadhana*). Like Krishna, Buddha and other saviours, Jesus the Christ attained to Godconsciousness and he realized the intimate relation which exists between the individual soul and the heavenly Father.

The seventh chapter deals with Christ and the Christmas. Swami Abhedananda has discussed in this chapter different opinions that were formed on the question of date of birth of Christ as well as of the Christmas. He has discussed the orthodox Christian belief, the description of the Apocryphal Gospel, the opinions of the higher critics of the Bible, the opinions of Eusebius, the first ecclesiastical historian (260-340 A.D.), Irenaeus (190 A.D.), Rev. Dr. Giles, Rev. Dr. Geikie, Canon Farrar, Mr. Bunsen, Rev. Mr. Gross, Saint Chrysostom, Dr. Hooykaus, the historian Gibbon and others. Besides, he has given many evidences of religious functions, observed in different Churches of different countries. The Swami has said that though there are some controversies regarding the date of birth of Christ, yet the Latin churches celebrate the Christmas festival on the 25th of December, the Greek churches celebrate twelve days after that, and the American churches twelve days later still. "If we go to Bethlehem, the home of the Christmas, we will see that this festival practically lasts for one month, being celebrated by different Christian sects at different times". Further the Swami says: "Now let us see why 25th of December was finally fixed as the birthday of Jesus. * * The ancient Egyptians fixed 25th of March as the date when the saviour Horus descended from the womb of Isis, the Virgin Queen of Heaven. * * Osiris, the son of the holy Vergin was born on the 25th December. The Greeks celebrate the day as the birthday of Hercules.

Bacchus was born on the 25th and so Adonis. Thus Hercules, Osiris, Bacchus, Adonis, Horus, Mithra, every one of them was born of a Virgin mother on the 25th of December, the day after the winter solstice". The Swami has very scholastically surveyed the dates of birth of different gods and saviours of different nations and has concluded "thus according to ancient traditions of different countries and different nations, the Christians also fixed the date of birth of their saviour, Jesus the Christ in 25th of December".

The eighth chapter deals with 'Vedanta and Teachings of Jesus'. Swami Abhedananda has said that ethically and spiritually teachings of Jesus are in complete harmony with the teachings of Vedanta, and the steps towards the attainment of spirituality are also identical, but Jesus spoke in parables, while Vedanta affords a rational foundation for ethics and religion.

The nineth chapter deals with 'Did Christ teach a new Religion'. Swami Abhedananda says: "As in India, Buddha rebelled against the ceremonials, rituals and priestcrafts of the Brahmans and introduced a simple form of worship and religion of the heart, so among the Jews, nearly five hundred years after Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth rebelled against the priestcraft of Judaism". Now, when Jesus appeared in Galilee, the religious atmosphere of the place was permeated with Persian doctrines, Hellenic ideas, Pythagorian thoughts and the percepts of the Essenees, Therapeutae, Gymonosophists and the Buddhists of India. The Jews were already divided into three principal sects like the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. The Sadducees were conservative and aristrocratic, while the Pharisees and Essenes were essentially liberal. The Synoptic Gospel says that although the mind of Jesus was not absolutely free from the superstitious beliefs of the Jews and although Jesus was somewhat influenced by the then prevailing thoughts and ideas of different sects, yet he was liberal and rational, and he preached the gospel of truth and peace. Swami Abhedananda has described here the peculiar doctrines and religious practices of the Buddhist monks, the Essenes and other sects, and has said that Jesus did not preach absolutely a new religion, but only it can be said that he gave a new life to the old truths.

The tenth chapter deals with life and teachings of Mohammed, the prophet of Islam. Mohammed was born in

Mecca in the sixth century A.D. Mecca was the capital of Arabia. Swami Abhedananda has given a historical account of the Arabian country and nation, in which Mohammed was born. Mohammed was descended from the family of Cossai, the priest of Kaaba and the chief of the Korish tribe of Mecca. His father's name was Abdulla and mother's name was Amina. Amina gave birth to Mohammed on the 20th August in the year 570 A.D. At the age of forty, Mohammed received divine inspiration and realized that he was the prophet of his people. In 630 A.D., he entered into Mecca commanding 10,000 followers, armed in battle array, took possession of Kaaba, destroyed the idols and triumphantly established the banner of Islam in the heart of Mecca. He changed by his teachings the character of the lawless Arab tribe and gave them law and justice. He preached the unity of God and unity of his prophet.

The eleventh chapter deals with life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. The Swami says that on Wednesday the 17th of February 1836 A.D.[1], Sri Ramakrishna was born at Kamarpukur in the district of Hooghly, West Bengal. His father's name was Kshudiram Chattopadhyay and mother's name was Chandramani Devi. When Ramakumar, the elder brother of Ramakrishna (his earlier name was Gadadhar Chattopadhyay) came to Calcutta and accepted the post of a high priest in the temple of Kali (Bhavatarini) at Dakshineswar. Ramakrishna came with him and lived with him at Dakshineswar. Ramakrishna was the lover of truth and freedom, and so Rani Rasmani and her son-in-law Mathuramohan were attracted with the magnetic personality of Ramakrishna. Mathur Babu approached Ramakrishna and urged him to take the charge of worship of the Divine Mother, after his elder brother Ramakumar passed away. At first Ramakrishna disliked to take up the charge, but afterwards accepted the post of the priest of the Divine Mother, Bhavatarini.

However, the Swami has beautifully described the divine life of Sri Ramakrishna and has said that in this age of scientific rationalism, Sri Ramakrishna has shown to the world how the Lord of the universe can be realized and attained in this life, and

[1] Romain Rolland mentioned in his book, *Prophets of the New India* (1928) that Sri Ramakrishna was born on February 18, 1836 (p. 8). But the date, as mentioned by Swami Abhedananda, is correct.

no one except him has ventured to go through all the tests of sceptics and agnostics to prove that he had attained to Godconsciousness. "Those who have seen and watched him day and night, have proclaimed before the world that he was the embodiment of highest spiritual ideals, given in all the scriptures of different nations of the world".

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

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CHAPTER I

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CHAPTER II

KRISHNA AND HIS TEACHINGS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Seers of Truth in ancient India, inspired by spiritual vision, realized the Almighty Lord of the universe, and at least two thousand years before Christ declared, "That which exists is One; men call It variously." This text of the Rig Veda, the oldest scripture of the world, proves that the conception of the one Supreme Being, without a second, came as a revelation to the purified souls of those great sages. Since that remote antiquity the principle of "unity of the Supreme Being under a variety of forms," has become the cornerstone of the structure of the universal religion of Vedanta. God is one, without a second; yet He is worshipped by different nations under various names, such as Brahman, Jehovah, Varuna, Siva, Vishnu, Ahura Mazda, Father in Heaven, Isvara, Divine Mother, Ti, Tien, Allah, Buddha. To Know that one Lord of the universe, to commune with Him, to pour forth the supplication of our loving hearts at His feet, and in time of distress to pray to Him for help and mercy—these have always been the ideal of religion.

Ages after the great religions of the world have produced sages and saints, seers and Prophets, Saviours and Incarnations among different races. Having obtained glimpses of that omnipotent and Eternal Being, they have taught others and directed them in the path of spiritual realization and God-vision. Each one of these great Prophets has saved the world, or a portion of it, from the evil effects of sin and wickedness and has rescued some souls from mortal and spiritual destruction.

Is it not true that Moses, the Prophet of Judaism, saved the Jewish nation from superstition and ignorance, from lawlessness and wickedness, by giving them laws and commandments, by showing them the path of righteousness and by instructing them in the highest moral and spiritual ideals? Think for a moment, what would have been the condition of the Jews had they not received these ideals, laws and commandments from the founder of their faith! History tells us that before the advent of the great Prophet of Judaism the tribes of

Israel were groping in the darkness of ignorance and superstition and were worshipping tribal gods in the form of the bull and the calf. They were engaged in sun-worship, in *Kewan* or Saturn worship, tree and serpent worship, and were appeasing the wrath of their gods by bloody sacrifices, nay, by shedding human blood upon their altars. Indeed, Moses saved the Jewish people from utter destruction, made a nation of them and prepared the field for the Incarnation of the Saviour Christ. He saw the same God who had been worshipped by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, conversed with Him, and received His commandments which he afterwards delivered to his lawless and superstitious people. Thus Moses became the Messenger of God, Yahveh, and the Saviour of the Jews. He also founded that great religion which still claims millions of votaries scattered all over the world. They find peace and consolation by following the path of Moses, and expect through his instructions to receive salvation after death.

The power and greatness which were displayed by him were not his own; but they came direct from the Supreme fountain-head of all powers and greatness. Moses himself was but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty Yahveh. Shall we then wonder why the Jewish people reverentially worship the memory of their master, honour and regard him as the greatest Prophet of their Lord; and why they do not recognize any other Prophet as greater than, or even equal to, the founder of Judaism? No, it is the natural outcome of the gratitude and devotion which a nation must have for its leader, benefactor, law-giver and Saviour.

As the Jews owe to Moses their moral, spiritual and religious ideals of the higher life, so the Iranians or Parsees are indebted to their great Prophet Zoroaster; the Chinese to Confucius and Lao-Tze; the Christians to Christ; the Buddhists to Buddha; the Arabs to Mohammed, and the Hindus to their Saviours. Each one of these was a leader and a law-giver to the people among whom he was born. Each one was a Messenger of the Supreme Lord of the universe, a Prophet and a Saviour in one form or another. Each one saw God, communed with Him, received His message, and directed his people. The followers of one may not recognize the Prophets and Saviours of other faiths, may not regard them as equal to their own, and

may even think theirs is the only one—the greatest of all; but the truth remains the same. Whether they can see Divinity in other Prophets or not, those others are nevertheless Messengers of God. The believers in sectarian religions cannot realize that the Lord of the universe manifests Himself among all nations, and in all ages, because their spiritual eyes are blinded by the screen of fanaticism and bigotry, and they have become narrow-minded, liberal and unspiritual in their views. They are not to be blamed, for they do not possess higher perceptions and cannot see the greatness in all these Divine Instruments of God.

Some people think that their forefathers (whether Jew, Parsee, Christian, Mohammedan, Chinese, Hindu or Buddhist), were the only ones favoured by the Almighty Lord, and consequently the Prophet, who arose among them, was the greatest of all and the unique Saviour of the world. Such ideas are entirely erroneous, for God is the just and impartial Lord of all nations, and not of one particular people. Wherever His manifestation is most needed, there does He sent either His Messenger, Prophet or Incarnation. The difference lies only in trying to limit the Infinite All-merciful Being by our narrow ideas and make Him finite, who else but we ourselves will be responsible for it? If we cannot recognize Divinity in the Prophets and Saviours of other peoples, than we have not realized the Divinity in the Prophet of our own; we have not, then, understood the Eternal Truth of "Unity of Godhead behind the variety of names and forms." If a mother does not recognize her own son when he changes the colour of his garment or puts on the dress of a foreigner, we are sure that she is not his true mother. Similarly, if a Christian, who sees Divinity in Christ alone and does not know Him when He comes in the form of Buddha or Krishna or in any other form, we are sure that he has not realized the Divinity of his own Master. How can we call him a true servant who does not recognize, revere and serve his Master when the Master changes His costume? He is not truly religious who does not see unity and harmony among all Prophets and Incarnations of the Lord, because true religion lies not in the profession of a creed, nor in the belief in a certain set of doctrines and dogmas, but in the realization of the Eternal Truth, that the one and the same Being manifests

Himself in and through a variety of forms under different names at various cycles of evolution.

According to Vedanta, the universe moves in cycles of wave forms. These waves of evolution rise, reach their zenith and gradually subside, to rise again in another wave. This cyclic evolution is to be found on the physical, mental, moral and spiritual planes of the universe. If we study the history of humanity, we see that nation after nation has risen, reached the climax of progress and civilization, and has gradually passed into oblivion making room for others to rise. But always we notice that on the highest plane of the spiritual evolution of mankind there is a shining Soul, a Prophet, a Saviour or an Incarnation.

Divinity dwells on the topmost crest of the spiritual wave of humanity. Whoever reaches the summit is transformed by that Self-Effulgent Light from a human, into a Divine Being. He becomes a God-man, a Messenger, a Saviour of the ignorant mass. Indeed, he is a part of the Divinity; he is no longer human, and through him flow the divine powers and transcendent wisdom of the Lord. Whatever he says is authoritative and is the standard of Divine Truth. He neither reasons, nor argues, nor does he care to give any proof for curious and unbelieving minds. By his magnetic personality he draws around him all those who are heavily laden with the sorrows and cares of the world, and who seek peace, rest and happiness. Such great souls direct the suffering and the miserable in the path of righteousness, show them the way to salvation, and the abode of blissfulness. They bring spiritual life and strength to struggling humanity. Ignorant minds alone declare that there has been only one manifestation of God, and that was the first and the last.

All true Prophets and Messengers of God are great. Each one of them was commissioned by the Almighty to deliver His message to the people among whom he lived. Each one of them was a glorious Son of God, adorned with divine qualities, a perfected soul manifested for the good of humanity to establish righteousness and to destroy evil.

By the law of cyclic evolution, the powers which these Saviours leave behind them, rise from a small centre and spread like a tidal wave inundating the world and everywhere fertiliz-

ing the soil of human minds and sowing the seeds of divine ideals. Then, in course of time, when that wave subsides, another Prophet, Saviour or Divine Incarnation appears in another place where such a manifestation is needed and where conditions are mature.

Moses brought the message of the Lord to the Jews who lived about 1400 years before the Christian era. His mission was suited not to the whole world for all ages, but to the tribes of Israel and their descendants. What he gave to them was a blessing. No one Prophet or Saviour has ever succeeded in bringing all the people of the world under his power and direction, nor will he succeed in ruling over the world for ever. Time brings changes, and new manifestations will be necessary. No one can say, "My master will be the master of all nations and will fulfil the spiritual needs of all ages." Would to God that it were possible for one such manifestation to supply the demands of all nations for all ages and for all climes! This world then would have been saved from religious quarrels, fights, persecutions and inhuman bloodshed; but that could not be, because unity in variety is keynote of the Divine will. It works through various forms, but the ideal of spirituality always remains the same. Who can change the Divine plan?

What the Jewish people needed about 1400 years before Christ, was not required among the Hindus at that time. History shows that evolution of their minds was then on a different plane; they were not lawless, nor were they worshipping tribal gods, planets and trees. They had the conception of one Supreme Being; consequently, they wanted something different from what Moses gave to the Jews; and to fulfil their demands and prayers, came in India Sri Krishna as their Saviour. He is worshipped by millions of Hindus as the Incarnation of God, and is regarded in the same light as Christ is in Christendom, for he has fulfilled the needs of that country.

Again, about 660 B.C. the Iranians, the ancient inhabitants of Persia, reached the culmination of culture and spirituality, and upon the crest of that spiritual wave appeared the shining soul of the Prophet Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism. He gave to those people what they required. Moses could not reach them, nor could any other Prophet fulfil their needs and

longings. About the same time there arose in China Lao-Tze and Confucius who granted to the Chinese whatever they needed, and showing them the path of morality and righteousness, became the Saviours of China. Lao-Tze established the highest ideals of true spirituality and Confucius gave the code of ethics, both bringing salvation to their people from wickedness and immortality. This tidal wave at that age covered the vast area of the Asiatic continent. Prophets, sages and Saviours arose in its different parts and on the highest point of the wave there appeared in India another great Saviour in the form of Gautama Buddha, the illustrious founder of the Buddhistic faith. He brought the Divine message of noble Truths which he gave to the world, and saved millions of souls from sorrow, suffering, misery, disease, death, self-delusion and ignorance, and showed them the path to Nirvana. Nearly six hundred years after Buddha—a period which is roughly calculated by the Oriental scholars as the cycle of a new spiritual wave, the glorious Son of God incarnated in Palestine in the form of Jesus the Christ. He gave his message to the world, and whether the world accepted it at that time or not, is not the question. He fulfilled his mission and passed away.

But that light which shone before the world from the centre of Palestine could not dispel the darkness of Arabia. The Arabs remained in ignorance, superstition and idolatry until six hundred years after Christ, when appeared Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, who gave salvation to his people, showed them the path of righteousness, and led them away from their lawlessness, to the worship of the one Lord of the universe under the name of Allah.

About the same time, in India, a tremendous unrest was caused by the corrupted form of Buddhism which had swept away the higher ideals of ethics and religion. Atheistic and agnostic views replaced the worship of one Supreme Deity. The Hindus needed a re-adjustment—a re-establishment of the universal Truth—and then arose Sankaracharya, who revealed the ancient faith and re-established the universal religion of Vedanta. Sankaracharya is regarded in India as the Incarnation of Siva and the embodiment of Divine wisdom. About six hundred years after him Ramanuja appeared in the South India, and Chaitanya in the North. Both of them are revered,

honoured and worshipped as Incarnations of Divine Love, and as the Saviours of mankind. They preached that the Lord of the universe is Infinite Love and that whosoever worships Him with whole-hearted love and true devotion will attain to salvation and everlasting bliss. Lastly, in the nineteenth century, there came Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna with his mission for the people of this age and for the future. His message was to establish the universal religion and to destroy the evils of sectarianism, bigotry and narrow-mindedness. He is worshipped today in India as Christ is in Christendom, and is regarded by his followers as a Saviour of mankind and as the consummation of all the Prophets and Saviours of the past. It is believed that his message is most fitted for the present age of science and rationalism. Ramakrishna gave a death blow to all religious intolerance and fanaticism by emphasizing the truth that all sects are like different paths which lead to the same goal. He propagated his mission among the most enlightened classes of people in modern India, and it is now spreading all over the world. In this cycle of reason and science one cannot remain sectarian and hold dogmatic ideas and narrow views. This is the spirit of the age, and it needs such a manifestation as the embodiment of non-sectarianism, toleration and universal sympathy for all religions.

Some of these great Ones are recognized by the masses as Prophets, some as Messengers of God, while others are worshipped as Divine Incarnations, as Saviours of humanity. Moses, Confucius and Mohammed are called Prophets of the Lord; Zoroaster and Lao-Tze are regarded as the Messengers of God, while Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Ramakrishna are classed with the Saviours of the world. Each of these has fulfilled his Divine mission by setting an example of purity, unselfishness and disinterested love for all; each has shown the path of salvation from sin and suffering, has established the highest ideals of spirituality, and has led human beings to the abode of truth and happiness beyond the ocean of death. The followers of each have obtained immortal life and Godconsciousness. Shall we deny such Messengers of God? Shall we remain so blind as not to see the Divine manifestation in these great Ones? Shall we be so narrow, intolerant and prejudiced as to accept only one Saviour, simply because our forefathers worshipped him,

and on that very ground alone, reject and disregard the other Prophets and Saviours of the world ? Nay! Nay! The time has come when we must put aside all sectarianism and bigotry and become broad and liberal, so as to follow them all, and place them upon the altar of that universal religion which is all-embracing and infinite in its scope. No sectarian religion has ever been tolerant enough to accept the teachings of all Prophets and Saviours of all nations; if this were possible, the world would be different. But today, by the light of scientific knowledge we are able to recognize the various Divine manifestations of all countries.

In this age of reason people are beginning to outgrow all opinions and limitations. The death-knell of dogmas, creeds and fanaticism has been sounded, and the sincere seekers after Truth are brought near the threshold of that universal religion which is nameless. They are more ready now than ever before to see unity and harmony underneath the diversity of sects and religions. If we close our eyes and do not see it, who is to be blamed ; For the message has come to us and we should receive "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you". Let us open our eyes and behold the Divine glory and realize the greatness of our souls. Blessed are they who have become followers of this grand universal religion.

A preacher of the universal religion is one who has seen God and who has realized Divinity in all of those who are worshipped as the Incarnations of God and the Saviours of the world. Such a preacher is very rare. If you ask me whether I have seen God, I will answer, "He that hath seen the Son, hath also seen the Father." The latest manifestation of Divinity was in the form of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Him I have seen, therefore, I have seen God and through him I have realized Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, Krishna and other great Prophets and Saviours. Whoever worships Ramakrishna, consciously or unconsciously, worships Christ, Buddha, Krishna as well as the God of the universal religion Who is nameless and formless. Have we not heard that message which he has given to the world again and again—"He who was Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Rama, Chaitanya, has now become Ramakrishna." Shall we not receive that Divine message ? Shall we not listen to that voice ? Yes, because his utterances contain the spirit of this age ;

we must consider them seriously before we turn a deaf ear to them. Why did Ramakrishna say that? If there were no truth in it, what object could have been gained by him, who lived most of his life in Divine communion without seeking anything from anybody, and who renounced all worldly relations for realization of the Eternal Being? He used to say, "My Divine Mother has shown me this truth; I do not know why." He considered himself as the child of God who is both Father and Mother of the universe.

The Lord of the universe graciously reveals Himself in that special form to which the earnest, sincere and purified soul of a true devotee is attached, to fulfil his prayers and to give enlightenment, spiritual strength and salvation. If we are devoted to Christ, we shall go to him, and in that form we shall see God. If we are devoted to Buddha, Krishna, Jehovah or to any other form, we shall realize God through that particular manifestation which we love with our whole heart and soul. Whosoever wishes to receive Divine grace should ceaselessly pray to Him as Christ, Zoroaster, Mohammed and Ramakrishna did at all hours of the day and night. The Lord will surely grant the prayers of His faithful devotee and save him from sorrow, suffering, misery, disease and death. Have faith in the Lord and do not doubt even for a moment. "He who has faith has everything, and he who doubts has nothing"—this is the teaching of all Messengers of God and of all the Saviours of the world. All Prophets and Divine Incarnations are unanimous on this one point, that faith is constructive and doubt is destructive. Therefore, we must have faith, first in ourselves as children of God, then in the Divine Ideal, the Eternal Father and Mother of the universe, and then in the Saviour or the Master who represents that ideal, and everything else will be added unto us.

The Lord says, "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever path, I reach him; all men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to Me, the Infinite Abode of Bliss and Love."

CHAPTER II

KRISHNA AND HIS TEACHINGS

Krishna, the Christ of India, is regarded as a Saviour of mankind and his teachings are known as the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Song Celestial.* Those who have studied this Divine Ode have often wondered at the vast wisdom of its teacher, and have asked: "Who was Krishna ? When did he live, and what were his works ?" Oriental scholars and Christian missionaries have often compared his life and teachings with those of Jesus the Christ. Some of them have denied the historical personality of Krishna ; while others have tried to prove that he was a mythical god of ancient India, and that he did not exist at all. Again, after noticing the wonderful similarity that exists between the lives of Krishna and Christ, many have come to the conclusion that the whole story of Krishna's life and teachings is based upon the life and sayings of Jesus the Christ, and that the Krishna-cult of the Hindus did not exist before the first invasion of that country by the early missionaries. Furthermore, some of the followers of Christ were so astonished at finding in India a religion so near like their own, that they could only account for it by supposing that the Devil, foreseeing the advent of their Saviour, originated a system of religion in advance of his, and just like it.

All these ingenious explanations of the Christian scholars and missionaries have not succeeded in quenching the fire of reverence, devotion and love, which was kindled upon the altar of the Hindu heart by the unparalleled character and divine powers of Krishna, the God-Incarnate, and the Saviour of mankind.

Waves of conquest and religious fanaticism have come over India from the West, one after another, and have swept away by their tremendous on-rush, millions and millions of lives and the most glorious spiritual monuments which that country had produced ; but still the marvellous ideal and the spiritual kingdom of the sin-atoning Krishna have remained for ages firm as the unshakable Himalayas, defying their strength and destruct-

ive power. The fanatical Mohammedans invaded India, holding their scripture, the Koran, in one hand, and a sword in the other, and brought terror and havoc in the heart of Hindu communities, ruined the temples of Krishna, looted the country, massacred the innocent priests and priestesses, sages and saints, and converted many to their faith of Islam by mere brute force ; notwithstanding all this, the illimitable powers of the Divine Krishna have survived the ravages of time. He still reigns over the hearts of the Hindu people, and will continue to reign in time to come.

In the present age, the Christain missionaries, supported by the enormous resources of the English-speaking nations, are trying with head and heart to place their ideal Jesus upon the alter of Krishna, and to convert his followers to their religion ; but the undying Divine powers which Krishna has manifested, will surely be able to withstand the futile efforts of ordinary mortals.

The name of Krishna is heard in almost every corner of the Hindu community throughout the length and breadth of the vast empire. His sweet and holy name is uttered and reverentialy repeated at all hours of the day—in sleeping, in waking, in working, in prosperity, in adversity, in times of woe and suffering, as during festivities and national rejoicings. The popular songs which are sung in India by the illiterate mass, describe the superhuman deeds and boyish sports of the Divine Krishna, the shepherd of mankind. In victory and in defeat, in nuptial ceremony or crematory rite, at the time of birth and death, the name of Krishna is uttered by millions of worshippers with the deepest feelings of devotion, love and reverence. In short, they have coupled the name of Krishna with everything that takes place upon the earth whether good, bad or indifferent. For the last three thousand years he has ruled over the heart of the nation as the most beloved Lord and Saviour of all.

The life of Krishna, to the Hindu mind, is as historical as the life of Jesus the Christ to the Christian. It is, of course, a well-known fact that no one has yet succeeded in giving authentic evidences to establish the truth of all the stories that we read in the Synoptic Gospels regarding the life of the Christ. On the contrary, the historic personality of Jesus has been deni-

ed over and over again by the most able scholars and higher critics of Europe and America. Still, the majority of Christians, disregarding their opinions, belive in the Lord Christ as a historic personage, worship him, revere him, and expect to obtain salvation through him after death. Similar is the case with Krishna, the Hindu Christ. There have been scholars in India who have denied his historic personality; some have regarded him as a mythical deity, while others have given authentic proofs of his earthly career. The mass of people, however, do not recognize such criticisms, but consider Krishna as a veritable personage who lived among the Hindu people as a great hero, and showed his Divine powers in order to establish his Spiritual Kingdom on earth. Whether or not we can give the exact time, date and year of the advent of Krishna, so far it is certain that his name was known in India hundreds of years before the Christian era. Centuries before Christ, Krishna was not only loved, honoured and worshipped, but was recognized by the vast majority of the Hindus as God-Incarnate and Saviour of mankind. The most authentic evidence in favour of this point can be gathered from the accounts of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador of Seleucus, who lived in India in the court of Chandragupta in the fourth century B.C.

After the invasion of India by Alexander the Great, between 333 and 327 B.C., Seleucus Nicator became his successor and ruled over the entire region between the Euphrates and the Indus, and sent his ambassador to the Court of Chandragupta, the reigning Emperor of India. These are all historical facts. Megasthenes lived in India for several years and left some records describing his experiences there which have been preserved and handed down by Arrian, the Greek historian. Among other things Megasthenes says: "He, the Indian Heracles, excelled all men in strength of body and spirit, he had purged the whole earth and sea of evil and founded many cities; and after his death, divine honours were paid to him." "This Heracles is especially worshipped by the Sourasenians, an Indian nation, in whose land are two great cities, Mathura and Cleisobara, and through it flows the navigable river Johares (Jamuna)."[1] This Cleisobara or Chrysobara is identified by

[1] Translation of *Arrian's Anabasis of Alexander and Indica*, by E. J. Chinnock, p. 408.

some with Calisapura,[2] but it was supposed by Pliny, the historian, to be the same as Krishna-pura, the city of Krishna, probably modern Dwaraka, which was founded by Krishna. Ptolemy mentions Mathura as the city of the gods. Prof. Lassen identifies this Indian Heracles with Krishna, while Prof. Wilson and other Oriental scholars think that the Heracles of the Greek writers was indubitably Balarama, the brother of Krishna.

Respecting the Hercules of India, Captain Wilford says: "The Indian Hercules, according to Cicero, was called Belus. He is the same as Bala, the brother of Krishna, and both are conjointly worshipped at Mathura; indeed, they are considered as one *Avatara* or Incarnation of Vishnu. Bala is represented as a stout man with a club in his hand. He is called also Balarama. As Bala springing from Vishnu or Heri[3] he is certainly Hericula, Heri-culas, Hercules."[4]

Arrian says that Alexander the Great saw those cities and other kingdoms governed by Surasenas or the descendants of the Royal family of Krishna. "Both Arrian and Strabo assert that the god Krishna was anciently worshipped in Mathura on the river Jumna, where he is worshipped at this day, but the emblems and attributes essential to this deity are also transplanted into the mythologies of the West."[5]

These historical accounts show how unfounded are the remarks of the Christian missionaries who believe that the whole story of the life of Krishna and his teachings was based upon those of Jesus the Christ. On the contrary, it is proved that Krishna existed centuries before Christ, and his teachings were already in writing at the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great. Sir William Jones, the father of the Oriental scholars in Sanskrit, after residing in India for several years said: "That the name of Chrishna[6] and the general outline of

[2] See Higgins' *Anacalypsis*, vol. I, p. 329.

[3] *'Heri'*, in Sanskrit *'Hari'*, means a Saviour; and 'Cula' the direct descent from a family. Therefore, Hercules means a direct descendant of Hari, the Saviour. This word, according to Higgins, is admitted to be neither Greek nor Latin, but of barbarian origin. See *Anacalypsis*, vol. I, p. 329.

[4] *Asiatic Researches*, vol. V, p. 270.

[5] Quoted in *Monumental Christianity*, pp. 151, 152.

[6] Sir William Jones always spells the name of this personage, 'Chrishna'.

his history were known in India long anterior to the birth of our Saviour and probably to the time of Homer (900 B.C.) we know very certainly."[7]

Sir Godfrey Higgins, one of the best English scholars and antiquarians of the last century, after making proper investigations and researches as far as he could, came to the conclusion that Krishna lived at the end of the Brazen Age. "He passed a life of the most extraordinary and incomprehensible devotion. His birth was concealed from the tyrant Kamsa, to whom it had been predicted that one born at that time and in that family would destroy him, *i.e.*, his power."[8] Mr. Higgins says: "In fact the sculptures on the walls of the most ancient temples —temples by no one ever doubted to be long anterior to the Christian era, as well as written works equally old, prove beyond the possibility of doubt, the superior antiquity of the history of Cristna to that of Jesus."[9] Again, he refutes the arguments of his opponents against the antiquity of Cristna by saying: "Cristna, his statues, temples and books, etc., respecting him are to be found where a Christian never came. Is it not absurd to suppose that the Brahmins could invent the story of Cristna and make it dovetail into all their other superstitions—make him form an integral part of their curious Trinity, the actual Trinity of ancient Persia and of Plato—make him also fit into the theological inferences of the modern Christians respecting the meaning of the first chapter of Genesis—make his story exactly agree with the orthodox massacre of the innocents, and finally make all this be received as an ancient doctrine and article of faith by millions of people, who must have known very well that it was all perfectly new to them and that they had never heard of it before."[10]

Captain Wilford, in his *Chronology of the Hindus,* fixed the date of Krishna and Parasara, who were contemporaneous with the Emperor Yudhisthira, as about 1180 B.C., while the astronomer Davis as well as Colebrooke believed that they lived as early as 1391 B.C. Mr. W. Brennard, the author of *Hindu Astronomy,* says: "The received opinion, however, as before

[7] *Asiatic Researches,* vol. I, p. 273.
[8] Ibid, p. 273.
[9] *Anacalypsis,* Vol. I, p. 160.
[10] Ibid, p. 337.

stated, is that Yudhisthira (with Garga and Parasara) lived some time about the 12th or 13th centuries before the Christian era."[11]

Furthermore, the most ancient sculpture of India in the Cave of Elephanta, near Bombay, representing the ferocious figure of King Kamsa (like the Herod of the Christian Bible), surrounded by slaughtered infant boys and holding a drawn sword, cannot be accounted for even by the ingenious theory of the Christian missionaries. This fact not only proves that Krishna lived centuries before Christ, but also establishes the antiquity of the whole story of His miraculous birth, His escape from the tyrant Kamsa, the infanticide by this wicked King and the other principal events of the Divine life of this Saviour.

The popular belief among the orthodox Hindus is that He lived towards the end of *Dwapara Yuga* or the Brazen Age, and the present Iron Age or *Kali Yuga* began on the very day when Krishna ascended to heaven. According to this belief or tradition, he must have lived about 3091 B.C.

But modern Hindu scholars like Shree Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and others have fixed the historical date of Krishna and that of the battle of Kurukshetra, as 1430 B.C.[12]

Although the name Krishna occurs many times in the hymns of the Rig Veda—such as in verse 23, hymn 116, book or *mandala* I; also in verse 7, hymn 117, *mandala* I—Oriental scholars cannot trace the identity of this Krishna, and whether he was the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. In one passage of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* we find the name of Krishna, the son of Devaki. Again, Krishna was also the inspired *Rishi* (seer) of many hymns (85-87 of *mandala* VIII; and 42-44 of *mandala* X) of the Rig Veda. From this we learn that He was contemporaneous with Vyasa who divided the Vedas into four parts.

The Sanskrit Grammarian Panini, who lived in the eleventh century B.C., mentions the name of Yudhisthira, Arjuna and Vâsudeva (the son of Vasudeva), another name of Krishna.

Furthermore, in the *Mahabhashya,* or the Great Comment-

[11] *Hindu Astronomy,* p. 119.

[12] See *Krishna-Charitra,* by B. C. Chatterjee, p. 22 also pp. 43-48. According to this author the Emperor Yudhisthira, a contemporary of Krishna, lived 1115 years before Chandragupta, the great Buddhist monarch, who defeated Seleucus Nicator, the successor of Alexander the Great, in a battle, and drove away the Greeks of India, becoming the Emperor of India in 315 B.C. He married the daughter of Seleucus. Therefore, the date of Yudhisthira was 315+1115=1430 B.C.

ary by Patanjali, on Panini's Sanskrit Grammar, which dates at least the second century B.C., we find convincing proof that the story of Krishna and Kamsa was current and popular during his lifetime, and that Krishna was worshipped as a god.

Prof. Bhandarkar of Bombay mentions the following allusions to Krishna in the *Mahabhashya*:

(1) That the stories of the death of Kamsa and the subjugation of Bali were popular and current in Patanjali's time.

(2) That Krishna or Vasudeva was mentioned in the story as having killed Kamsa.

(3) That such stories formed the subjects of dramatic representations, as *Pauranic* stories are still popularly represented on the Hindu stage.

(4) That the event of Kamsa's death at the hands of Krishna was in Patanjali's time believed to have occurred at a very remote time.[13]

Another convincing proof that Krishna was an important deity in India, long before any Christians visited the country, we gather from the Bhitari pillar inscription, dating probably the second century A.D., which was transcribed and translated by Dr. W. H. Mill. The passage in Dr. Mill's translation reads thus: "May he who is like Krishna, still obeying his mother Devaki, after his foes are vanquished, he of golden rays with mercy protect this my design".[14] The German antiquarian Lassen corrects it thus: "Like the conqueror of his enemies, Krishna encircled with golden rays, who honours Devaki, may he maintain his purpose."[15]

These evidences will be enough for our present purpose to convince the reader that Krishna was a historic personage, and that He lived centuries before Christ.

Now let us see under what circumstances he was born. If we study the monumental Sanskrit works of the ancient Hindu writers, which describe the life of our hero, we shall find that long before the advent of Krishna, it was prophesied by ancient Hindu sages and seers of Truth that in the latter part of the Brazen Age and before the beginning of the *Kali-Yuga* or the present cycle, when the earth would be over-burdened with sin,

[13] *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, vol. III (1874), p. 16.
[14] *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January, 1837, pp. 1-17.
[15] *Indische Alterthumskunde*, ii (1849), p. 1108n.

evil and evil-doers, a Divine Saviour would incarnate in the Royal house of Yadu, would be born of Devaki, a holy virgin, and relieve the oppressed earth of its burden of sin and sorrow. Captain Wilford, the English antiquarian, referring to this prophecy said: "The advent of their Saviour Krishna occurred in exact fulfilment of a prophecy found in their sacred books."

As the close of the Brazen Age was coming nigh, the signs of sin and evil such as wickedness, treachery, murder, ill-treatment of women and children, moral and spiritual depravity, were visible in almost all parts of India. Kings and their subjects became extremely sinful; priests and priestesses grew insincere and hypocritical; the worship of the Supreme Being, the one Lord of the universe, was regarded as useless, and the masses of people, instead of worshipping Him, were devoted to the minor *Devas* or bright spirits, such as Indra, Agni, and offered bloody sacrifices to propitiate them. Kings grew tyrannical; sages and saints found no peace, being constantly threatened, oppressed and over-taxed by these despotic monarchs. At such a period of the decline of virtue and righteousness, the most cruel and wicked King of the Royal line of Yadu deposed his God-fearing father Ugrasena and usurped the throne of Mathura, the holy city and capital of Hindusthan. His name was Kamsa; he was so tyrannical that the bare mention of his name was enough to terrorize all, and to send a thrill of panic and despair through the hearts of those who were good and peace-loving. He was so wicked and despotic that he would slaughter anybody and dispense with no justice. Although he was so unrighteous and sinful, he had a sister whose name was Devaki (the Divine woman), who was very pious, pure and chaste. In the Hindu scriptures she is described as one through whom the designs of the Lord were accomplished. She spent most of her time in solitude and in contemplation of the Supreme Deity, would burst into tears at the sight of her brother's cruelty, and prayed day and night for peace, justice and righteousness among the people. No animal food ever touched her lips. This description reminds one of the character of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as given in the 'Gospel of Mary', where it is said that no animal food ever touched her lips.

Devaki was given in marriage to a good man of Royal blood, by name Vasudeva (the divine Vasu). Before the marriage

ceremony was completed, the King suddenly heard a celestial voice warning him: "The fruit of this marriage shall be the cause of thy death and shall overthrow thy kingdom." Hearing this, King Kamsa was startled. He flew into a rage, drew his sword and ran after his sister to kill her on the spot. The newly married husband, Vasudeva, intervened and begged of him to save the life of his innocent wife. King Kamsa did not know what to do; he retreated, but said that he could save her life only on one condition—that he would destroy all of her children immediately after their birth. Vasudeva, with a broken heart, finding no other way out of this unforseen situation, was obliged to agree to the inhuman proposition of the brutal King Kamsa, and promised that he would present to him all children that would be born of them. The King then withdrew, trembling with anger and fear, reluctantly sparing the life of his sister who would be the mother of his enemy and destroyer.

The newly married couple were extremely unhappy and miserable at this unforeseen event. The unfortunate Vasudeva and Devaki, followed by a large crowd of friends and relatives, left the palace, and crossing the sacred river Jamuna by boat went to Gokula where Vasudeva's friends and relatives, headed by Nanda, the shepherd chief of the town, had arranged a grand reception for the wedding party. But they soon discovered that both Vasudeva and his wife were trying to suppress the outburst of their sorrowful hearts, that they were most unhappy and miserable, and that they were mourning over some kind of misfortune that had befallen them. When the weeping Vasudeva described the cause of their sorrow, the sad news came to Nanda and his friends like thunder rending their tender hearts and crushing all feelings of joy and happiness which they would have experienced on such an occasion. The whole company began to cry for help and protection against the wicked deeds of the heartless tyrant King Kamsa; but Nanda, who was a wise and spiritual soul, soon realized that it was the will of the Lord that such a thing had happened, and consoled the suffering couple by asking them to resign themselves to the mercy of the Supreme. Vasudeva and Devaki attained peace in their minds by surrendering their own will to the Divine dispensation.

Vasudeva lived quitely with Devaki in Gokula and enjoyed the peace and happiness of a righteous family life. In course

of time, Devaki became the mother of a beautiful male child. Vasudeva, true to his promise, sent the glad news to Kamsa who instantly ordered his demoniac attendants to bring the child to him. When they obeyed the Royal command, the cruel King with his own hands destroyed the little thing. In this way Vasudeva had to sacrifice seven children, like the seven Maccabean brothers, before the Son of God came to him to relieve the earth of her load of sin and evil.

Before the birth of his eighth son, Vasudeva came with his wife to Mathura to pay taxes to King Kamsa.[16] The cruel and heartless King, hearing that Devaki was going to be a mother, imprisoned them both in the dark cell of a dungeon within the compound of the palace. There the innocent couple had to spend many days and nights without food, drink, or any kind of comfort whatever. They passed their time in extreme agony, praying to the Lord every hour of the day for relief from the diabolical persecutions of the tyrant. Their hands and feet were chained with heavy iron chains and they were watched day and night by armed sentinels.

At last, after midnight on the eighth day of the moon, in the Hindu month of *Bhadra* (about the middle of August), when every creature was enjoying sound sleep, the Divine Son descended upon this earth in a dark cave of that prison. Immediately after his birth, the whole cave was illumined by the celestial light which emanated from the body of the new-born Saviour. The *Devas* (angels), appeared in the cell, singing the praises of Krishna and his holy mother, bowed down at his feet, called him the Incarnation of Vishnu—the second person of the Hindu Trinity—and worshipped him with flowers; while celestial music filled the atmosphere. These unusual events frightened the parents as they did not know what was going to happen; but remembering the fate of their seven children they burst forth into tears and prostrating themselves on their faces, cried aloud in utter despair: "O Lord, why hast Thou sent Thy son to us in this prison? How can we save his life? Have mercy upon us and protect Thy child from the hands of that cruel and inhuman King Kamsa." When they were weeping, crying and praying, the babe comforted his

[16] Cf. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed. (Luke, ch. II, 4, 5.)

parents by saying: "O mother, O father, weep no more; thy troubles and cares are over. I have come to rescue thee and save mankind. Behold my Divine power." The child then manifested his spiritual glory and showed them his transfiguration. He said: "Carry me, O father, to thy friend Nanda who lives in Gokula; cross the Jamuna river, exchange me with his new-born infant and return here." Thus saying, he became the babe once more; and from this time began the manifestations of the most wonderful powers of the Lord—the heavy iron chains were loosened, the doors of the seven gates of the palace were unlocked and opened at midnight, and the sentinels who had been watching over them enjoyed, as it were, the sleep of death, and did not know what was happening. Vasudeva carried the baby in his arms, covering him with swaddling clothes, went to the banks of the Jamuna; and the mighty river with its swift current giving way, he forded it easily, the water not rising above his knees. Thus Vasudeva crossed the water safely in the dead of night and arrived at the home of his friend Nanda. The doors of the house opened miraculously, and he entered into the nursery, where he found a child playing in a basket (almost like the basket which they use today for feeding the cattle), exchanged the babes unnoticed by any mortal, took the other in his arms, and came back the same way to Mathura before daybreak.

In the meantime, Narada, who is described in Hindu mythology as the messenger of God, who can go freely to any place in no time, appeared before the wise men, sages, saints and innocent shepherds, heralding, like the morning star, the advent and glorious rise of the Divine Sun, the Saviour of mankind. The next morning the shepherds and wise men, saints and sages came from all quarters to see the Son of God, worshipped him and presented the offerings of curd, milk, flowers, fruit, gold and incense at his holy feet. The wise men noticed in his little form the signs of an *Avatara,* or Incarnation of the Supreme Deity, and gave him the name Krishna, the Redeemer of the world.

There, in the palace, the cruel King Kamsa was notified by his attendants that a child was born in the cell of the prison. Immediately the babe was brought before him, but when he looked at it, finding that it was a female child, he flew into a

rage of anger and explaimed: "The wicked child is trying to deceive me, I shall get rid of it immediately." Seizing the infant in his hands to throw it on a stone, as he advanced, he stumbled, and the child slipped out of his hold, laughed and disappeared in the air, declaring in a thundering voice: "He who will destroy thy power is growing in Gokula." It is said in the Hindu Scriptures that in this manner inscrutable Divine powers were manifested by Krishna, the Lord of all. Immediately King Kamsa ordered that all male children in Gokula must be destroyed, and sent around demoniac persons to kill Krishna and his step-brother Balarama, who were growing in that neighbourhood. This description is more authentic than that of the infanticide of Herod, because King Kamsa, like Herod of the New Testament, was a historic person. Christian scholars and higher critics of the Bible, however, maintain that King Herod had died at least ten years before Christ was born.

The Divine powers that were manifested through the body of Krishna were able to overcome all the evil influences and destructive forces that came towards him, and he destroyed all those demons and wicked persons who were sent by Kamsa. Many miracles are described in the Sanskrit literature relating to the life of Krishna, which may not be interesting to Western readers, but some of those miraculous events are similar to those found in the life of Jesus as described in the Apocryphal Gospel of I, Infancy. As Krishna grew older, he lived in Gokula, and played in the most beautiful forests and groves of Vrindavana. There his playmates were his step-brother Balarama and the shepherd boys and shepherd girls. They all recognized in Krishna Divine powers, used to make wreathes of wild flowers and tender leaves of wild trees, weave crowns of them and place them on his head, calling him the king of shepherds.

Krishna used to dance with the shepherd boys and girls, play the flute and sing, captivating the hearts of all by his sweet, musical voice. Even at this age, between eight and twelve, Krishna displayed his superhuman powers and attracted the devout souls of the inhabitants, making them feel the presence of Divinity in their midst; and they in turn, all revered and honoured him as their Lord, their master and their king.

Krishna at one time found that all the cattle, sheep, and his playmates (cowboys and girls) were lying dead, having

been poisoned by drinking the water of the lake Kaliya, in which lived the demon, a huge serpent, who wished to destroy all the friends of Krishna. He jumped into the lake, assuming the weight of the three worlds, as it were, and, standing on the head of the serpent, bruised it and tamed the demon. He then brought the dead cattle and shepherd boys and girls back to life. In India there are pictures and statues of Krishna with a huge serpent under his holy feet.

In this manner, Krishna spent his childhood and the early part of his youth working miracles, resuscitating the dead, healing lepers, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, defending the weak against the strong and the oppressed against the oppressor. Even at this age, he established the worship of the one Supreme God, and abolished sacrifices to the minor gods like Indra. At one time all the inhabitants of Brindavana were engaged in the worship of Indra, the vedic god of thunder and rain. Seeing this, Krishna said: "What is the use of praying to the minor *Deva* Indra, the god of thunder? Be devoted to the Supreme Lord, and se His presence in all human beings. Feed the poor, and give to the needy." It is said that Indra grew extremly angry, and deluged the earth with torrents of rain to destroy his enemies; but Krishna saved the lives of his followers by miraculously protecting them in the cave of Govardhana mountain. There he transfigured himself into his Divine form and showed his superhuman powers to all.

Again, Krishna is said to have revived the life of a widow's son who was dead. After performing all these and many other miraculous deeds in his pastoral life, as he reached his youth, determined to return to the city of Mathura which was governed by the tyrant Kamsa, to fulfil the ancient prophecy by destroying the powers of that wicked King. On his way he was followed by a multitude of shepherds and shepherdesses. He entered the city dressed as a shepherd boy, but all the inhabitants hailed him as their King. In the crowd a hunchbacked woman, Kubja by name, came near Krishna and anointed him with oil and sandal-wood paste. Krishna in return pardoned her sins, made her straight and beautiful, and promised that his regard for her would remain perpetual. Even to this day, if we go to Mathura we will hear everybody speaking of the

good fortune of this deformed woman. We may compare this with the account of the deformed woman given in Luke, chap. XIII, verses 11, 12.

Krishna also forgave the sins of a tailor who adorned him with royal robes. Thus, in the midst of loud acclamations of joy rising from the souls of all the inhabitants, Krishna, accompanied by his heroic brother, Balarama, entered the palace of Kamsa, fought with the wicked King and his party, and won the victory of righteousness over evil by destroying him and his sinful comrades. Thus Krishna, having fulfilled the old prophecy, went down to the dungeon of the prison to release his father Vasudeva, his mother Devaki, and Ugrasena, the aged father of Kamsa, who had been treacherously deposed by his wicked son from the throne of Mathura. According to th Hindu law, Krishna, being the conqueror of Kamsa, had absolute right to the throne of Mathura, but he showed his greatness and dislike for earthly powers by installing Ugrasena on the throne, and restoring to him his lawful kingdom. Thus our divine hero re-established peace and righteousness among the inhabitants of the vast realm. All people rejoiced at this change, especially the parents of Krishna, when they realized that it was their own son who had brought an end to their misery and suffering, and fulfilled the divine promise.

From this time Krishna lived happily with his parents and friends in Mathura for a few months, and did not return to Brindavana to stay with his foster-parents—the shepherd King Nanda, and his wife Yashoda.

Up to this age Krishna had received no education of any kind. So his parents sent him and his step-brother Balarama to Banaras (the Athens of Ancient India, and the seat of science, philosophy and vedic wisdom) to study under Sandipani, the great sage and spiritual teacher. It is said in the *Mahabharata* that Krishna mastered all sciences and vedic wisdom in twenty-four hours and that seeing his uncommon talents the sage marvelled and exclaimed that Krishna was not a man, but verily, the god of wisdom in human form. However, Krishna, following the custom of a Hindu student, lived with his tutor for some time. During this period he practised austerities, penance, fasting and all spiritual exercises enjoined in the science of Yoga. The *Mahabharata* says that he, finding his

spiritual master, Sandipani, mourning over his dead son, asked him what he could do to relieve him of his sorrow. Sandipani, knowing that Krishna was not an ordinary mortal, begged of him to bring his son back to life.

It is said that Krishna, in search of the soul of the boy, plunged into the sea, where he encountered with the demon of a dragon, fought with him, killed him, took his huge shell, and finally went down into Hades. He blew the giant's shell which made such a terrific noise that all the inhabitants of Hades were frightened by it. Krishna, the Saviour of the sinners, was moved at the sight of their sufferings and graciously pardoned their sins and sent them to celestial regions. At last, finding the soul of Sandipani's son, he miraculously brought him back to the earth, and offered him to his master. A similar story of going down to the Hades is described in the life of Jesus the Christ in the sixteenth chapter of the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. The only difference in the description is, that when Christ went to the door of Hades, the inhabitants heard a voice of thunder and the rushing of winds. On another occasion, Krishna is said to have revived the dead child of Uttara.

After he returned to Mathura from Banaras, Krishna discovered that the city was under a siege by the enormous army of Jarasandha, the powerful King of Magadha (modern Bihar), and the father-in-law of the dead King Kamsa. Krishna, by his commanding skill, succeeded in routing the army, and raising the siege of the city. Jarasandha attacked again and again (seventeen times) in order to take revenge and to punish the slayer of his son-in-law.

Krishna, desiring to avoid such repeated attacks, moved the capital of Ugrasena's kingdom to the Island of Dwaraka, where he built a large city, well protected by sea and high mountains. But Jarasandha continued his attacks against Dwaraka until he was defeated and killed by Bhima, the giant-like brother of Arjuna.

Born of a warrior caste, Krishna was unrivalled in strength and heroic valour. Even at the time of his marriage with Rukmini, the most beautiful daughter of Bhishmaka, the King of Vidarbha, he showed his heroism by outwitting Jarasandha and Sishupala, who were his rivals and bitter opponents.

He installed Yudhisthira, the eldest brother of the Pandavas, on the throne of Hastinapura as the Emperor of India, and thus, as a King-maker, he settled the destiny, not only of the ruling monarchs of India, but of the whole Hindu nation of that age. Although Krishna was so divinely powerful, yet he was so meek, gentle and humble, that at the great inaugural ceremony of Emperor Yudhisthira, he voluntarily took the task of washing the feet of all the guests.

It is said that Krishna fulfilled he earnest prayers of Draupadi by miraculously feeding the multitude with a small quantity of food, as well as by saving her from insult and ignominious treatment in the hands of the Kauravas.

Again, Krishna was appointed as the peace-maker to stop the civil war that had been brewing for sometime between the Kauravas and Pandavas. The speech which he delivered before the court of Dhritarastra proves that Krishna was the greatest statesman of that time. In that famous address he said to Duryodhana, the chief of the Kauravas: "Make peace, Prince of the Bharata race, with the wise, brave and energetic Pandavas, great in learning and self-subjugation. From peace would proceed happiness to kinsmen and friends, aye my dear, to the whole world.....The man who having heard the advice of his friends followeth it not, is tormented in the end," etc.

Those who have read the *Mahabharata,* the history of ancient India (which is called the greatest book in the world), will remember that during the battle of Kurukshetra, Krishna appeared in the battle-field, not as a warrior, but as a charioteer, to advise his friend and disciple, Arjuna. He did not hold a weapon against warriors, but stood like the Divine witness of the great battle, which lasted for eighteen days. By this act, Krishna proved before the world that he did not believe in war, that he did not encourage fighting and quarrels among any classes of people whether rulers or the ruled, that he was a peacemaker, and that he stood for justice and righteousness; but his policy was to defend the oppressed against the oppressor. It was for this defence of justice as well as for the protection of the weak that he was obliged to hold arms against anybody.

On the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra, Krishna immortalized himself as an Incarnation of the Lord and as the greatest of spiritual philosophers, by singing the celestial song of the

Bhagavad Gita, which has been translated into every language of the civilized world.

In the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita,* Krishna says to Arjuna:

"Hear again, O thou of mighty arms, my word supreme, which wishing thy welfare, I shall speak to thee as thou delightest to hear.

"Neither the hosts of gods, nor the great seers, known my origin; for I am the source of all the gods and the great saints. (2)

"He who knows me as birthless and beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of the world, is undeluded among mortals, and is emancipated from all sins. (3)

"Intelligence and wisdom, absence of delusion, forgiveness and truth, self-control and subjugation of the mind, pleasure and pain, birth and destruction, fear and fearlessness, feelings of non-killing and of sameness, contentment, austerity, munificence, fame and shame—from Me alone arise these different kinds of disposition. (4, 5)

"The seven great *Rishis,* the four sons of the Creator, and the Manu, or the first man of each evolutionary cycle, were all born of my mind, and endued with my essence—from whom have descended all these creatures of the world. (6)

"He who knows in truth this glory and Divine power of mine, is endued with unshaken realization; there is no doubt in this. (7)

"I am the origin of all, and everything evolves from me—knowing this, the wise worships Me with love." (8)

In the eleventh chapter it is said that Arjuna, after seeing the wonderful transfiguration of Krishna, declared:

"I see the gods in Thy body, O God, and all the multitudes of varied beings. (15)

"I see Thee with infinite forms all around, but cannot find the beginning, middle or end of Thy universal form. (16)

"Thou art the imperishable, the supreme object of knowledge, the great abode of the universe. Thou art the unchangeable protector of the eternal religion, and I know that Thou art the everlasting Spirit. (18

"Without beginning, middle or end, with infinite power, with endless arms, with the sun and moon as Thine eyes, and

the blazing fire as Thy mouth, I see Thee scorching the worlds with Thy radiance. (19)

"The space between the heaven and the earth and all the quarters are pervaded by Thee alone. Having seen Thy marvellous and awful form the three worlds are trembling." (20)

Every word of this description bears testimony to the fact that Krishna was the Incarnation of Divinity in a human form.

As on the one hand Krishna was the greatest of the political heroes, a king-maker, and the founder of the city of Dwaraka, and has been recognized by all as the ideal statesman, so on the other hand, he was the greatest of the spiritual heroes that India has produced. All the wise men of India of all ages have paid allegiance to Lord Krishna, and have accepted him as their spiritual leader and as the Saviour of mankind.

The teachings of Krishna resemble those of Jesus the Christ, and constitute the teachings of Vedanta.

The reader may compare the following quotations from the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* with the teachings of Christ:

"He who hates no creature, but is kind and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment, and egoism, equanimous in pleasure and pain, forgiving, contented, meditative, self-restrained and firm in faith, whose heart and soul are directed to Me, is dear to Me. (13, 14)

"He with whom the world is not annoyed and who is not annoyed by the world, who is free from self-esteem, envy, fear, and anxiety, is dear to Me. (15)

"He who is free from leanings, pure, vigorous, above all temporal affections, free from worldly agitations, who has abandoned all passionate endeavours, is dear to Me. (16)

"He who neither rejoices nor hates, neither grieves nor desires, who has renounced merit and demerit, and is full of devotion and love, is dear to Me. (17)

"He who is the same towards friend and foe, in honour and dishonour, in heat and cold, in pleasure and pain, free from attachment, with whom censure and praise are alike, who is taciturn, content with any condition, homeless and steady-minded, is dear to Me. (18, 19)

"They who follow this eternal law as spoken above, endued

with faith and regarding Me as the highest goal and devoted, are exceedingly dear to Me." (20)

The teachers of the dualistic, qualified non-dualistic, and monistic Vedanta like Madhvacharya, and Chaitanya, Ramanuja and Sankaracharya, and others, unanimously hold Krishna as the ideal spiritual leader and the perfect Incarnation of Divinity on earth.

In the life of this Saviour there is to be remarked a most wonderful combination of divine and human qualities. He possessed all divine powers, and showed by his actions that all noble human qualities reached perfection in him. Nowhere do we find another example of perfect embodiment of all the moral, spiritual and godly attributes which were manifested in the character of Krishna. All the wise philosophers of the East have paid homage to him for his supreme wisdom; and and all the religious leaders of India down to the present day, have regarded him as the ideal master, the ideal hero, the Incarnation of God and the greatest of all the spiritual manifestations of the world. Although the people of India believe that there have been many *Avataras* or Incarnations of the Lord—in fact, God incarnates Himself whenever and wherever there is the decline of virtue and uprise of unrighteousness—still Krishna is worshipped by the Hindus of all castes and creeds as the greatest of the Saviours. No other Incarnation, neither Buddha, nor Christ, can take the place of Krishna, because neither of them could harmonize God and the world, and neither of them could set as high an example in social, political, ethical and spiritual ideals as was done by this world-redeemer (Krishna).

In his early life, Krishna showed to his playmates that he was the embodiment of Divine Love; in his youth, that he was the personification of heroism, patriotism, justice and righteousness; in his maturity he married a beautiful girl to set before the world's eye the ideal of a perfect householder; yet his non-attachment to earthly relations was so great that he witnessed the destruction of his own Royal race before he passed away, because his relatives and kinsmen deviated from the path of virtue. Through all the acts of his life, whether in politics, war, or in the duties of a householder, he emphasized and proved the truth of the grand ethical law: "Wherever there is

virtue, there is victory and glorious life both in this world and hereafter; and wherever there is vice, unrighteousness, injustice and immorality, there is destruction physically, morally and spiritually."

As a spiritual teacher, Krishna practised and advocated the life of renunciation. For many years he himself lived a pure, chaste and austere life of a Sannyasin, who is absolutely free from worldly ties, and it is for this reason that he has become the ideal of the Sannyasins or Hindu monks who have broken the chains of attachment and worldliness.

The students of the *Bhagavad Gita* know that Krishna established the Fatherhood of one omnipotent personal God, and taught peace, charity, love for the human beings as also for the lower animals, kindness to all, unselfish and disinterested work for the good of humanity, and faith in the inexhaustible goodness of the Supreme Lord of the universe. He forbade revenge and taught his disciples to return good for evil, and love for hatred. He preached the immortality of the soul and reward and punishment for our own thoughts and deeds by the law of *karma;* emphasized the truth that individual souls are eternal, and that each soul will reach salvation and perfection in the end. His religion was the religion of love and devotion. It is said that "His lofty precepts and the purity of his life spread his fame throughout India and finally won for him, more than three million followers."

For the first time in the religious history of the world was preached by Krishna universal toleration for all sects and creeds, and it was he who declared: "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever religion, I reach him. All men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to Me." He inculcated that all religions are like so many paths which in the end lead the individual souls to one goal of Absolute Truth and happiness. Thus he sounded the death-knell of religious bigotry and persecution among various sects. It was for this reason that, since his time, there has been no religious persecution in the history of India.

Thus after establishing his spiritual Kingdom on earth and fulfilling his Divine mission, Krishna wished to depart from this world of imperfection. When the exact time of his ascension to Heaven arrived, he forbade his disciples to follow him, and

went alone to the forest on the top of a hill at Prabhasa near Dwaraka. There he reclined against the trunk of a tree, crossing on bare feet, and withdrawing his mind from the world of senses, entered into deep *samadhi* and communed with the Infinite. While he was reposing in this Yoga posture, his feet were shot through with the arrow of an unknown barbarian hunter. When the hunter came nearer, thinking that it was a deer that he had shot, he discovered that his victim was Lord Krishna himself. Overcome by grief at the sight of his inhuman deed, he fell at his wounded feet, kissed them, and bathed them with tears of repentance. He begged pardon for his sin and forgiveness for his brutal crime ; but the Saviour of sinners smiled, and blessed him saying: "Thou hast fulfilled the prophecy of the old sage, and I forgive thy sins ; thou shalt go to Heaven." Krishna went into *samadhi* again and remained motionless. His disciples and followers hearing of this heart-rending event came to see him, and when they were mourning and weeping bitterly, he comforted them by giving them his last instructions and blessings ; and promising that he would come again, he passed out of his body and ascended to the Heaven in the presence of men and gods. Thus ended the glorious career of this wonderful Saviour of ancient India.

Shall we wonder why the Hindus of today worship and honour the name of Krishna, and why he has been upheld as the highest Ideal of the nation during the last 3,000 years ? No other Incarnation of Divinity appeals to the minds of the Hindus so strongly as this sin-atoning Saviour of mankind. As he has been the national ideal in the past, so will he remain in time to come. Every Hindu believes in the second coming of Krishna at the close of the present cycle and realizes that whosoever worships him attains to salvation and eternal happiness. Krishna himself promised this in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Giving up all the formalities of religion, come unto Me, follow Me, take refuge with Me. I shall make thee free from sins and shall give thee eternal Life ; grieve not."

CHAPTER III

ZOROASTER AND HIS TEACHINGS

All the great religions of the world, Judaism, with its two offsprings, Christianity and Mohammedanism; Brahmanism, with its offsprings, Buddhism and Lamaism, and Zoroastrianism, had their origin in Asia, the home of all religions. Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism arose among the various branches of the Semitic race, while Buddhism, Lamaism and Zoroastrianism have been the religions of the Aryan race. It is the unanimous opinion of the great Oriental scholars of today that in prehistoric ages the forefathers of the Aryan peoples lived together in Central Asia before they branched off and migrated to different parts of the world, that they spoke one language, more primitive than ancient Sanskrit or Zend, the mother of all existing Aryan languages of Asia and Europe, believed in a common religion and had one form of worship. The descendants of one branch moved north-westward and migrated to five different parts of Europe. It is believed that the Celts originally belonged to the Aryan race, that they settled in the extreme west of Europe, in France, Great Britain, Ireland and Belgium; the robust Teutons in Northern and Central Belgium; the robust Teutons in Northern and Central Europe; the Slavs in the eastern parts (Russia and other places); and they formed the Italian and Greek peoples in the South.

The other branch of the Aryan family settled in the southern part of Asia, between the rivers Indus and Euphrates, and were known at that time by the name of Indo-Iranians. A religious schism then divided the Indo-Iranians into two branches, which gradually became separated under the names of Indo-Aryans, or Hindu-Aryans, or the Hindus who settled in the north-western part of India, and the Irano-Aryans, or Iranians who settled in Iran, or ancient Persia. The belief, worship and religion of the Hindu-Aryans have been handed down to us in the form of the Rig Veda, the most ancient scripture of the world. There we find that these ancient Hindu-Aryans were monotheistic, worshiping one God under the name of Asura-Varuna. *Asura* means 'living' and *Varuna*

(Greek, *Ouranos*), the 'Lord of the universe'. Although they believed in minor gods or *Devas* (bright spirits), Varuna was the God of all gods. The same Asura-Varuna was worshipped by the Iranians as Ahura Mazda. After the religious schism, the *Devas,* or good spirits of the vedic period, were called *Daevas* (evil spirits or demons) by the Iranians. The cause of that schism was, perhaps, that the Iranians gave up the worship of Ahura Mazda (the Supreme Lord of the universe), and took to the worship of those who are described in the vedic scriptures as demons or evil spirits, and that they began to practise black magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and gradually became immoral and unrighteous. Thus relinquishing the early race ideals, and separating themselves from the Hindu-Aryans, the Iranians became more and more degenerated and immersed in a sea of ignorance, superstition, demon-worship, witchcraft, sorcery, immorality, vice and unrighteousness; while the Hindu-Aryans retained their spiritual ideals, as we find in the vedic writings. They developed six systems of philosophy and the monistic religion of Vedanta, which is so beautifully described in the ancient *Upanishads.*

The greatest Prophet among these ancient Iranians was Zoroaster, who manifested in order to re-establish true religion and the worship of Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Lord of the universe. Zoroaster was preceded by three great Iranian saints, Vivanghant, Athwya and Thrita, as Moses was preceded by three great Jewish sages, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is said that long before the advent of Zoroaster, King Yim of Iran, foresaw in a vision the perfect image of the coming sage, and prophesied the defeat and absolute overthrow of the demons at the birth of the glorious Prophet. Many other prophecies are given in the Avestic writings which existed centuries before the coming of the great Saviour of Iran. Some people think that Zoroaster was not a historic personage, just as there are many today who believe that Shakespeare never lived, that the life of Napoleon was a myth, and that Christ, Buddha and Krishna were not historic figures, but the majority of the Oriental scholars are of the opinion that the Prophet of Iran was absolutely historical.[1]

[1] Prof. A. V. W. Jackson says: "It is the more interesting to know something about the life and character of this Persian law-giver and

Although there is among them a dispute regarding the exact date and place of his birth, some say that Zoroaster lived about 6000 B.C., and others maintain that he was born in Bactria about 12000 B.C.; but the actual historical time cannot be earlier than the middle of the seventh century B.C. The Prophet of Iran was a direct descendant of the Royal line of the house of Manushcihar, the ancient sovereign of Iran. His father's name was Pourushaspa, and his mother was known as Dughdhova. Tradition says that he arose in the west of Iran, and that his native place was the district of Atropatene, or Adarbaijan, in the neighbourhood of Lake Urumiah.

The story of the birth of this great prophet is as miraculous as the stories of the births of other great Saviours of the world. It is said that the glory of Ahura Mazda descended from Heaven and entered into the house where dwelt the future mother of the Prophet, and remained with her until she was fifteen years of age. At this time, her father, being under the influence of evil spirits, was convinced that she was bewitched by some demon, and so sent her away to the district of the Spitamas. There guided by the holy spirits and archangels, Dughdhova married Pourushaspa of the Spitama family and became the mother of the Prophet of Iran. Various miracles are described regarding the time when the conception took place, and they are of a similar nature to those of Christ, Buddha and Krishna. It is said that Dughdhova saw archangels coming to her, worshiping and praising the unborn child. The birth of Zoroaster, like the birth of all saviours of the world, was of a Virgin Mother, was heralded by a star, and many other spiritual signs and omens, and accompanied by the most wonderful events. The scriptures of the Zoroastrians recount that at the time of the birth of the Saviour of Iran, all nature rejoiced, even the trees, rivers and cattle expressed joy and gladness, and that the evil spirits were frightened, and took flight into the depths of the earth. It is also said that his birth was a perfect fulfilment of the prayers of the Holy Father, Pourushaspa, to Haoma (the same as the vedic *Soma*). Thus, amidst the rejoicings of nature and miraculous signs, the great

philosopher of old, this religious teacher of ancient Iran, because much has been added in the last few years to our knowledge of Zoroaster as a historical personage" (*Persia, Past and Present*, p. 57.)

Messenger of Ahura Mazda was ushered into this world about the year 660 B.C. to fulfil the Divine Mission. Well has it been said by Professor Jackson: "Messiahlike he appears, and the land of Iran rings with his clarion note of reform. He is born as one out of the fulness of time".[2] Tradition says that at the time of his birth he showed wonderful signs of wisdom and Divine powers. Instead of crying like the child of an ordinary mortal, the young prophet immediately burst forth into loud laughter, and his little brain began to throb so violently that no one could lay his hand upon the infant's head. The parents rejoiced at the sight of these marvellous events, and many angels and archangels were seen coming to worship him. They gave him the name of 'Spitama Zarathustra', meaning 'Righteous', in Iranian language. 'Spitama' was the family designation, and 'Zarathustra' was his name. There are different ways in which this name has been spelled and pronounced. Some spell it 'Zarathustra', others 'Zartust', 'Zardusht', 'Zarduhasht', and so on. There are various meanings given by scholars to this name, which are more or less imaginary; but now it is believed that 'Zarathustra' is a Sanskrit compound word, 'Zarad' and 'Ushtra'; 'Zara' or 'Zarad' means 'old', and 'Ushtra', 'camel' —'an old camel', or 'one whose camels are old',—a very prosaic name indeed! The Greeks called him Zoroaster for the first time, but he was known in Iran, and in the ancient Zend writings of the Parsees as Zarathustra.

From the moment of the Saviour's advent, demons and wicked spirits intrigued against him to take his life, and the Turanian King, Durasrobo, the chief of the demon-worshippers was the Herod of that time. This wicked King made various attempts to destroy the young child, and sent all the demoniac spirits to kill him; but by Divine Providence the life of the young Saviour was miraculously preserved, and the machinations of the King were frustrated.

We know very little of the early life of the prophet of Iran excepting these miracles. In his seventh year he was placed by his father, Pourushaspa, under the care and instruction of a wise man named Burzin Kurus. The Syriac and Arabic reports say that Zarathustra was a pupil of the Prophet Jere-

[2] Cf. *Persia, Past and Present*, p. 59.

miah, that he studied with him, and when he proved treacherous, he was cursed by Yahveh with the affliction of leprosy. At this age, however, Zarathustra showed his great wisdom in argument with the wise men—he rebuked the heretics and put them to confusion, in the same manner as the Christ did, when he was twelve years old.

At the age of fifteen he took religious vows, by assuming the *'Kusti'*, or the sacred thread and the religious girdle, as did the Brahmins in India upon entering a student's life. Like the high-caste Hindus, the Iranians, or Parsees, still wear their sacred thread. At this time Zarathustra despised all earthly desires, and cared nothing for worldly pleasures. His soul was soaring high above the attractions of the senses. He searched not for the enjoyments of earthly life, and had great love and compassion, not only for all humanity, but also for all living creatures. The sight of misery and the misfortunes of humanity touched his great Soul ; even the sufferings of a starving dog, it is said, stirred the All-loving Soul of the great Saviour of Iran.

Reaching the age of twenty, he left his parents' house, and wandered from place to place, living the life of purity and righteousness. For ten years he travelled in the forests and desert places, and lived alone in caves and on mountain-tops, eating nothing but cheese and milk. In the silence of his forest-retreat, he succeeded in conquering his physical body, and bringing his senses into absolute subjugation. He spent most of his time in religious preparation, reflection and meditation. His spiritual eye gradually opened, and he was ready to see prophetic visions. In the stillness of that lonely desert his soul, transcending the attractions of the world of senses, rose high and entered into the ecstatic rapture of *samadhi*, communion with the Supreme Being, Ahura Mazda, the Lord of the universe. As the great Prophet of Judaism communed with Yahveh upon the summit of Mount Sinai, so did Zarathustra with Ahura Mazda, on the top of Mount Sabatan, the Iranian Mount Sinai. During this time, he received spiritual visions and wisdom from the Lord, for he was following the path of the ancient Magi. Herodotus tells us that the ancient Magi always used to worship on the tops of high mountains. We should remember that the word 'Magi' was used for the ancient Median tribe of priests who lived in Persia long before the

time of Zarathustra and he himself was often called the 'Magian Prophet', 'The head of the Magians', because he supported the wisdom and learning of the ancient masters.

Thus, after spending ten long years in preparing himself for spiritual realization, the Prophet of Iran received in his thirtieth year, Divine Light of Revelation, and became the world-renowned Messenger of Ahura Mazda. The first Divine Revelation came to him on the banks of the Daiti River (the Jordan of Zoroastrianism), at dawn of the fifth day of May, of the thirty-first year of the reign of the Iranian King, Vishtasp. It is described in the Avestic writings, that after crossing the river four times, as the Prophet stood on the banks, he suddenly beheld, coming towards him from the south, the glorified celestial image of an archangel. It was Vohumanah, the archangel of good thought. Gradually that colossal figure(nine times the size of an ordinary man stood before him, radiant with celestial glory,[3] and Zarathustra whose eyes were dazzled, fainted at this unexpected vision. The archangel then commanded him to lay aside the garment of his physical body, and directed his soul in ecstatic *samadhi* to the Heavenly abode of Ahura Mazda and the Amshaspands, or archangels, the personified qualities and attributes of Ahura Mazda. After entering into the celestial abode, Zarathustra offered his homage to Ahura Mazda and His attendants and took the seat of an enquirer. Then the Supreme Lord Himself instructed the Prophet in the cardinal doctrines of the faith, and imparted Divine Wisdom to him.

It is said that this vision was repeated three times on the same day. Thus being initiated by the Supreme Lord Himself Zarathustra became the Saviour of Iran ; and obeying the commands of Ahura Mazda he began to preach that great religion which was afterwards known as Zoroastrianism or Mazdasnanyan or Mazda-worshiping religion. He tried at first to convert all demon-worshippers and evil men and women, as well as their chiefs who are known in the Zend Avesta, as Kavis and Karaps. But his powers were not yet strong enough and he failed in his attempts. For two years he struggled hard to find the right soil wherein to sow the seed of his new religion, but he did not succeed. At this time Zarathustra, obeying the com-

[3] It reminds one of the vision that appeared to Daniel on the River Hiddekel.

mand of Ahura Mazda, visited a rich Karap, Vaedvoisht by name, and demanded one hundred youths, maidens and teams of four horses, as a gift for the Lord. But the prophet received an arrogant rebuff, and fled to the Lord for refuge. The Lord comforted him by assuring him that the offender would receive eternal punishment after death. This reminds us of Elijah, who pronuonced the doom of Ahaziah when he did not recognize the God of Israel.

Zarathustra travelled from place to place, and it is said that he went to India and to China, and that no one received his message. He became greatly discouraged, and did not know what to do, but again was comforted by Ahura Mazda, who said: "The time has not yet come, thou needest further revelations". Between the thirtieth and fortieth year of his age, Zarathustra had six more prophetic visions, and among these he held converse with six great archangels, who were the presiding lords of animals, fire, metals, earth, water and plants.

In the second vision Vohumanah, the archangel of good thought—who was also the presiding lord of domestic animals, such as cattle and horses—asked Zarathustra to take proper care of all these useful animals, and to protect them. In his third vision, Asha Vahishta, the archangel of perfect righteousness, who was the presiding lord of sacred and secular fires, enjoined upon the Prophet the care and protcetion of all fires, sacred and secular. In his fourth ecstatic vision he held converse with Khshathra Vairya, the archangel of good royalty, who presides over metals, and who assigned to him their care. Then in the next three visions Zarathustra had conference with three other archangels: Spenta Armaiti, the archangel of pious modesty, ruling over earth; Haurvatat, the archangel of perfect health, ruler of waters; and lastly, Ameretat, the archangel of immortality, who was also the presiding lord of plants.

These six ecstatic visions of Paradise, following the first one on the banks of the Daiti River, may be compared with the seven Heavens of Mohammed. By their means Zarathustra became well acquainted with the celestial hierarchy of God, the angels, and archangels. During these ten years he received the whole of his spiritual revelations and the wisdom that is contained in the Zoroastrian scriptures, the Zend Avesta. He brought from heaven the highest knowledge of the Supreme

Lord, Ahura Mazda, as also the Ahuna Vairya, the paternoster of Zoroastrianism. As he was descending from the celestial abode, he was attacked on his way by the combined forces of evil that stood against him. Ahriman, the Satan of Zoroastrianism, intrigued to destroy him once more, and sent his chief attendant 'Buiti', to tempt and overthrow the messenger of Ahura Mazda; but he was defeated by the spiritual powers of Zarathustra. The Zend Avesta says:

"1. From the region of the north rushed Angra Mainyu, the deadly, the Dava of *Daevas*. And thus spake the evil-doer Angra Mainyu, the deadly: 'Drug, rush down and kill him'; O holy Zarathustra! The Drug came rushing along, the demon Buiti, who is deceiving, unseen death.

"3(7). And the Drug said unto Angra Mainyu: 'Thou tormentor, Angra Mainyu! I see no way to kill Spitama Zarathustra, so great is the glory of the holy Zarathustra'.

"Zarathustra say (all this) within his soul: 'The wicked, the evil-doing Daevas (thought he) take counsel together for my death'.

Ia.

"4 (11). Up started Zarathustra, forward went Zarathustra, unabated by Akem-mano, by the hardness of his malignant riddles; he went swinging stones in his hand, stones as big as a house, which he obtained from the Maker, Ahura Mazda, he the Holy Zarathustra.

" 'Whereat on this wide, round earth, whose ends lie afar, whereat dost thou swing (those stones), thou who standest by the upper bank of the river Darega in the mansion of Pourushaspa?'

"5 (16). This Zarathustra answered Angra Mainyu: 'O evil-doer, Angra Mainyu! I will smite the creation of the Daeva; I will smite the Nasu, a creature of the Daeva; I will smite the Pairika Knathaiti, till the victorious Saoshyant come up to life out of the lake Kasava, from the region of the dawn, from the regions of the dawn.'

"6(20). Again to him said the maker of the evil world, Angra Mainyu: 'Do not destroy my creatures, O holy Zarathustra! thou art the son of Pourushaspa; by thy mother I was

invoked. Renounce the good religion of the worshippers of Mazda, and thou shalt gain such a boon as Vadhaghna gained, the ruler of the nations.'

"7(24). Spitama Zarathustra said in answer: 'No! never will I renounce the good religion of the worshippers of Mazda either for body or life, though they should tear away the breath!'

"8(27). Again to him said the maker of the evil world, Angra Mainyu: 'By whose word wilt thou strike, by whose word wilt thou repel, by whose weapon will the good creatures (strike and repel) my creation, who am Angra Mainyu?'

"9(29). Spitama Zarathustra said in answer: 'The sacred mortar, the sacred cups, the Haoma, the Word taught by Mazda, these are my weapons, my best weapons! By this Word will I strike, by this Word will I repel, by this weapon will the good creatures (strike and repel thee). O evil-doer, Angra Mainyu! The good Spirit made the creation: he made it in the boundless time. The Ameska-Spentas made the creation the good, the wise sovereigns.'

"10(35). Zarathustra chanted aloud the Ahuna Vairya. The holy Zarathustra said aloud: 'This I ask thee: teach me the truth, O Lord!"[4]

Thus conquering Ahriman, the Prophet of Iran became the master of all demons and began to preach again. However, after ten years of struggle and spiritual activity, he made only one convert to his faith, and that was his own cousin, Metyomah, who remained until his last moment as faithful as St. John, the disciple. The triumph of his faith was not achieved until two years later, when he converted Vishtasp, or Gushtasp, the reigning monarch of Iran. For two years he had to struggle vigorously, and perform many miracles before he could convince this great King. The learned priests of the court of Vishtasp intrigued against him, accusing him before the King of being a sorcerer; they also persuaded their sovereign to throw the Prophet into a dungeon to die of starvation. It is said that Zarathustra remained in prison for some time, but protected by Divine Providence, and directed by the archangels, he miraculously restored to health the King's favourite black

[4] *Vendidad-Fargard* XIX, pp. 209-212.

horse, whose four legs had been suddenly drawn up under his belly, so that he could not move. When this miracle was performed, King Vishtasp, became convinced of his supernatural powers, and falling at his feet worshipped him as the Prophet of Iran. The Prophet restored the four legs of the horse on four conditions: first, that Vishtasp should accept the new faith; secondly, that he should give his own warlike son, Isfendiar, to fight in support of this religion; thirdly, that the queen should be converted; and lastly, that the King should reveal the names of all those who had plotted against him. The King's counter requests were also four in number: first, that he might know his final doom, and his place in paradise; secondly, that his body might become invulnerable; thirdly, that he might have universal knowledge; and lastly, that his soul might not leave his body until the resurrection. Three archangels appeared, and, with their celestial grandeur, brightness and majesty, dazzled the eyes of the monarch, his Queen, the members of the Royal family and of the court. As the archangels proceeded to the palace of Vishtasp, their radiance seemed to him like a heaven of complete light. The King trembled at the sight, and all his chieftains were confused. A voice spoke out from the light, that they had come at the bidding of the Lord to show him the glory of the religion of Zardust. King Vishtasp was convinced. He accepted the creed, and had a glimpse of Paradise. The archangel Ashavashisto gave him a drink of the fountain of life. Seeing the wonderful sight, Queen Hutosa and the brother of the King were also convinced, and all of them became devoted followers of Zoroastrianism. The struggling creed now found a Royal patron and protector in Vishtasp, who became the defender of the faith and may be called the Constantine of this religion.

It is said, that in order to commemorate the conversion of King Vishtasp, Zarathustra planted a cypress tree in front of the great fire-temple at Kishmar. Soon the tree grew very large, spreading its branches over an immense area. It was believed that this was a sign that the new faith would advance rapidly under the fostering care of the Royal patronage. From now on the gospel of Zoroaster, protected by sovereign power, continued to spread throughout the country. It was no longer confined to the small family of the reigning monarch, but all

the subjects and attendants of the King, the people of Iran, and of the other provinces of Persia embraced the new religion.

Tradition says that Zarathustra defeated all the great philosophers and Prophets of India, Babylon and Greece. There are stories in the Persian scriptures regarding the conversion of Sankaracharya, the great commentator of the Vedanta philosophy, who lived in the seventh century A.D. In the same manner it is narrated that Vyasa, the renowned author of the epic *Mahabharata* as well as of the *Vendanta-sutras* (aphorisms), who lived about 1400 B.C., was converted by Zarathustra. The Avesta also tries to make Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, his disciple. But all these stories were afterwards added to the Avestic wrintings, and did not exist at that time. Historically speaking, Vyasa, Buddha and Sankaracharya could not be contemporaries of Zarathustra. Similarly, the Avesta attempts to prove that some of the ancient Greek philosophers, like Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, also became the diisciples of the Prophet.

The religion of Zarathustra spread very rapidly among the Jews (especially the Pharisees) in Babylon during the Babylonian Captivity. There is a tradition that he himself went to Babylon and converted thousands to his faith, but there is no authentic proof that he did so. The Avesta relates that King Vishtasp, who was a very zealous supporter of the creed, vigorously started a crusade on behalf of the true religion against its enemies and all demon-worshippers. It is also said that Vishtasp was married twice, and that he had a large family by his second wife, who was a patroness of the Prophet. He had eighteen sons and two daughters, all of whom embraced Zoroastrianism. The King's brother, Zairi Bairi, who was a great hero, became a staunch follower of this religion. Tradition says that Zarathustra himself married three times, and had many children. By his first wife he had one son and three daughters; the youngest daughter, whose name was Pourucista, married Jamaspa, the wise councillor and chancellor of the King, and brother to Frashostra, the Wizir and attendant upon Vishtasp's throne. By his second wife, the Prophet had two sons. Frashostra, the Wizir, became so devoted to Zarathustra that he gave his daughter to him to be his wife. This wife, Hvovi, bore no earthly child, but is described as the noble con-

sort of whom will be born three great millenial Prophets of Zoroastrianism, Ukshyat Ereta, Ukshyat Nemah and the Messiah, Saoshyant. The Messiah will come on the last day of judgment, when this world of evil will be destroyed, and a new one will be created by Ahura Mazda. He will then overcome and destroy the powers of evil.

The Avesta says: "He (Saoshyant) shall restore the world, which will (thenceforth) never grow old and never die, never decaying and never rotting, ever-living and ever-increasing, and master of the wish, when the dead will rise, when life and immortality will come, and the world will be restored at its wish." (*Zamyad Yast,* 89). This was the beginning of the conception of a spiritual Messiah in the Zoroastrian faith.

Fifteen years elapsed between the conversion of King Vishtasp and the holy wars against his inveterate foe and mortal enemy Arjasp, the Turanian King, whom later history describes as the infidel Turk. During this period Zarathustra preached the gospel, and performed many miracles, took proper care of fires, cattle and metals; healed the sick, restored the sight of a blind man; established many fire-temples and spread his reform over all the country; exercised his powers in suppressing demon-worship, witch-craft, and sorcery; drove pestilence from the land, and succeeded in overcoming all national calamities and disasters. During this time, he himself acted as the chief priest of his own religion. There existed in Iran ten principal places of fire-worship before the time of the Prophet and there were three kinds of fires for the three classes of people, according to their social position:—the fire for the noble classes, or the priests, which was the oldest, and was called the 'fire of the divine glory', which still exists among Zoroastrian priests in India. This was the most sacred of the holy fires of Iran. There was also a separate fire for the warrior classes and another for labouring classes. These three classes among the Iranians were like the three castes among the Hindu people of ancient India.

At the end of fifteen years the history of Zarathustra's religion began a new chapter by declaring, in 601 B.C., holy wars, crusades, fights and bloodshed, which the Prophet thought necessary for the spread of his faith, and which continued till 583 B.C. During this period the war cry of the true

faith against unbelief filled the air of Iran as it did later in Arabia when Mohammed preached his new religion and was opposed by the unbelievers. The Avesta describes in glowing terms the minute details of this holy warfare, and mentions some eight powerful enemies who were vanquished by King Vishtasp and his gallant brother Zarir (Zarivairi). It also relates how, at the invocation of the King and his brother for divine aid, Ahura Mazda sent victory upon their banners and thus fulfilled the prayers of His devotees.

The great holy war was against the Turanian King, Arjasp. It is said that King Arjasp, being inspired by the evil designs of Ahriman, and guided and directed by him, issued an ultimatum to the effect that King Vishtasp must abandon the new creed, or be prepared to have his country invaded within two months. Hearing ths ultimatum, Vishtasp was very angry, but being unwilling to give up his faith to which he was devoted with his whole heart and soul, he declared a holy war against Arjasp. The Turanian King invaded the country with an army of 300,000 men, and fought two battles within two weeks against 144,000 chosen men of Iran under the command of King Vishtasp and his heroic brother Zarir.

Yatkari Zariran says: "As the battle opened, the dashing leader Zarir began the fight as fiercely as when the god of Fire burst into a hayrick and is impelled onward by a blast of the storm. Each time as he struck his sword down, he killed ten Khyons ; and as he drew it back, he slew eleven. When hungry and thirsty he needed only to look upon the blood of the Khyons and he became refreshed."

But Zarir was treacherously slain by a poisoned spear hurled from behind, by a magician, Vidrasfsh, who was promised the fair hand of Arjasp's daughter as a reward. After the death of Zarir, his young son, who was like a giant in strength, took the lead, killed Vidrasfsh the traitor, routed the enemies, defeated Arjasp, and compelled him to retreat in humiliation to his own land.

Vishtasp marched back to the city of Balkh, the capital of Iran, and celebrated the victory by honouring the young hero Bastvar, and his own valiant son Isfendiar. He sent Bastvar, the son of Zarir, at the head of an army of 100,000 picked men to Kallakh, the capital of Arjasp's country, in

order to complete the conquest. Thus ended the first holy war.

King Vishtasp, the defender of the faith of Zoroaster, then started crusades against unbelievers in foreign lands, and deputed his two sons upon the hallowed mission of converting all nations to the new religion. It is said that their efforts were divinely crowned with success.

Nearly eighteen years after his defeat the Turanian King Arjasp again invaded the country of Iran and the second holy war began. In this war Arjasp successfully stormed the capital of Iran, sacked the city, destroyed the holy temples and massacred the priests while they were engaged in their devotional exercises.

Shahnamah gives a graphic description of the final scene which closed the glorious career of the prophet of Iran: "The army (of Turan) thereupon entered Balkh and the world became darkened with rapine and murder. They advanced towards the Temple of Fire (Ataskadah) and to the palace and glorious hall of gold. They burned the Zend Avesta entire and they set fire to the edifice and the palace alike. There (in the sanctuary) were eighty priests whose tongues ceased not to repeat the name of God; all these they slew in the very presence of the Fire and put an end to their life of devotion. By the blood of these was extinguished the Fire of Zardusht." It is also said that the fanatical invaders at last entered the temple of Nush Adar where the Prophet of Iran stood before the holy altar in his oratory, holding a rosary in his hand and praying to the Lord. A Turk, Turbaratur by name, attacked the Prophet with his sword and crushed the head of the Divine Master. Tradition says that Zarathustra threw his rosary at his enemy and that the fire proceeding from it fell on Turbaratur and consumed him on the spot. Thus Zarathustra received his martyrdom at the age of seventy-seven, on the day of Khur in the month of Atravahishto, on the eleventh day of the second month of the Zoroastrian year.[5]

There are many legendary accounts, in Greek and Latin literature, of Zarathustra's death by lightning or a flame from Heaven, but the Iranian tradition says that he met a violent

[5] Prof. A. V. W. Jackson reckons this date of Zoroaster's death as May 1, 583 B.C.

death as described above. Thus the great messenger of Ahura Mazda and the founder of the religion of Mazda-worship, passed away at the zenith of his glory, leaving hundreds of sincere followers who continued the propaganda of the faith with fanatical zeal and enthusiasm.

The holy war ended at the defeat of Arjasp by Vishtasp's son, who drove him out of Iran, and pursuing his vanquished enemy into his own capital in Turan, massacred the people and destroyed the power of Ahriman by slaying the wicked King.

After the death of Zarathustra his prophetic mantle as the chief priest of the faith fell upon his son-in-law, Jamaspa, who became his successor in the pontifical office of Iran. It was he who wrote down the teachings of the Prophet, which are called the Avesta and Zend, the Scriptures of the Zoroastrians. Frashaoshtra, the father-in-law of Zarathustra, became the first apostle of this creed and lived for many years expounding the doctrines of the faith.

Zoroastrianism did not die at the death of its founder, but began to spread rapidly, for the seed of this religion, like that of many others, was the blood of the martyrs slain. Within a short time it became the state-religion of Persia, and remained such until the wave of Mohammedanism swept over Persia, and destroyed by fire and sword its glorious monuments. Persia is now a Mohammedan country, and a few Zoroastrians are to be found there. They were persecuted and driven out of that land, and were obliged to take refuge in India, where religious toleration has always been the ideal of the Hindu nation. Here under the protection of the Hindu monarchs, Zoroastrians have been allowed to follow their faith, to practise their religious rites and ceremonies and to live peacefully in the heart of Hindu communities. They are known as Parsees. The principal place of their worship is the great Fire-temple in Bombay. Today the Parsee population in India is less than one hundred thousand.

Although Zoroastrianism suffered great loss from foreign invaders like the Greeks, Romans, Mohammedans, it still has left indelible impression upon the religious creeds of Judaism, Christianity and Mohammendanism. During the Babylonian Captivity the Jews received for the first time the idea of heaven and hell, of angels and archangels, of a spiritual Messiah, of the resurrection and the last Day of Judgment. These have

given foundation to the doctrines of Christianity, and Mohammedanism as well.

People have an erroneous idea that Zarathustra's religion was fire-worship. Fire was a sacred symbol in the Avesta, and was regarded as the Son of Ahura Mazda, but neither is described as God, nor to be worshipped. He did not teach the worship of fire, but the worship of the one Supreme Lord of the universe, under the name of Ahura Mazda. Fire was only the sacred object, the symbol of the Divine, as it was in all ancient sacrifices. Zarathustra preached for the first time that all that is good and beneficial to mankind is the creation of Ahura Mazda; and everything that is evil or malignant is the creation of the evil spirit Ahriman or Satan (the Devil in Christianity). This good God, or the Spirit of light and brightness, is constantly opposed to the evil spirit, or the spirit of darkness. At first, Ahriman was one of the angels of Ahura Mazda against whom he rebelled. Being driven out of Heaven by the Lord, Ahriman became His constant adversary. It was Ahriman who brought evil into this world, to destroy the good creation of Ahura Mazda; and this fight between good and evil will continue until the last Day of Judgment when the world will be renovated, and the triumph of good over evil will be the final result. Zarathustra believed in Heaven and hell, and said that all those who perform good deeds, hold good thoughts, and use good words will go to Heaven, and attain to immortal life; while evil thoughts, evil deeds, and evil words lead the sinner to eternal hell. There is a paradise of good deeds and a paradise of good thoughts and of good words. At the dawn of the fourth day after death each soul is resurrected; the souls of the virtuous go to the paradise of good thoughts, good deeds and good words, and eventually enter into the abode of Ahura Mazda, receive the golden throne and enjoy celestial Bliss; while the souls of the wicked suffer in endless darkness after resurrection. This is the universal law for all men and women.

We read in the Zend Avesta, *Yast* XXII:

I.

"1. Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, thou Holy One!'

" 'When one of the faithful departs this life, where does his soul abide on that night ?'

"Ahura Mazda answered:

"2. 'It takes its seat near the head singing the Ushtavaiti Gatha and proclaiming happiness: "Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes !" On that night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"3. —'On the second night where does his soul abide ?'

"4. Ahura Mazda repeated: 'It takes its seat near the head singing the Ushtavaiti Gatha and proclaiming happiness: "Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes !" On that night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"5. —'On the third night where does his soul abide ?'

"6. Ahura Mazda repeated again: 'It takes its seat near the head singing the Ushtavaiti Gatha and proclaiming happiness: "Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes !" On that night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"7. At the end of the third night, when the dawn appears, it seems to the soul of the faithful one as if it were brought amidst plants and scents: it seems as if a wind were blowing from the region of the south, from the regions of the south, a sweet-scented wind, sweeter-scented than any other wind in the world.

"8. And it seems to the soul of the faithful one as if he were inhaling that wind with the nostrils, and he thinks: 'Whence does that wind blow, the sweetest-scented wind I ever inhaled with my nostrils ?'

"9. And it seemes to him as if his own conscience were advancing to him in that wind, in the shape of a maiden fair, bright, white-armed, strong, tall-formed, high-standing, thick-breasted, beautiful of body, noble, of a glorious seed, of the size of a maid in her fifteenth year, as fair as the fairest things in the world.

"10. And the soul of the faithful one addressed her, ask-

ing: 'What maid art thou, who art the fairest maid I have ever seen ?'

"11. And she, being his own conscience, answers him: 'O thou youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, of good religion, I am thy own conscience !'

" 'Everybody did love thee for that greatness, goodness, fairness, sweet-scentedness, victorious strength and freedom from sorrow in which thou dost appear to me.'

"12. And so thou, O youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, of good religion ! didst love me for that greatness, goodness, fairness, sweet-scentedness, victorious strength, and freedom from sorrow, in which I appear to thee.

"13. When thou wouldst see a man making derision and deeds of idolatry, or rejecting (the poor) and shutting his door, then thou wouldst sit singing the Gathas and worshiping the good waters and Atar, the son of Ahura Mazda, and rejoicing the faithful that would come from near or from afar.

"14. 'I was lovely and thou madest me still lovelier; I was fair, and thou madest me still fairer; I was desirable and thou madest me still more desirable; I was sitting in a forward place and thou madest me sit in the foremost place, through this good thought, through this good speech, through this good deed of thine; and so henceforth men worship me for my having long sacrificed unto and conversed with Ahura Mazda.

"15. 'The first step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Good-Thought Paradise;

" 'The second step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Good-Word Paradise;

" 'The third step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Good-Deed Paradise;

" 'The fourth step that the soul of the faithful man made, placed him in the Endless Lights.'

"16. Then one of the faithful, who had departed before him, asked him, saying: 'How didst thou depart this life, thou holy man ? How didst thou come, thou holy man ! from the abodes full of cattle and full of wishes and enjoyments of love ? From the material world into the world of the spirit ? From the decaying world into the undecaying one ?

" 'How long did thy felicity last ?'

"17. And Ahura Mazda answered: 'Ask him not what

thou askest him, who has just gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress where the body and the soul part from one another.

"18. '(Let him eat) of the food brought to him, of the oil of Zaremaya: this is the food for the youth of good thoughts, good words, good deeds, of good religion, after he has departed this life. This is the food for the holy woman, rich in good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, well principled and obedient to her husband, after she has departed this life.'

II.

"19. Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: 'O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit, Maker of the material world, thou Holy, One !'

" 'When one of the wicked perishes, where does his soul abide on that night ?'

"20. Ahura Mazda answered: 'It rushes and sits near the skull singing the Kima Gatha, O Holy Zarathustra !

" 'To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda ? To whom shall I go with praying.'

" 'On that night his soul tastes as much of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"21. —'On the second night, where does his soul abide ?'

"22. Ahura Mazda answered: 'It rushes and sits near the skull, singing the Kima Gatha, O Holy Zarathustra: "To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda ? To whom shall I go with praying ?'

" 'On that night his soul tastes as much of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"23. —'On the third night where does his soul abide ?'

"24. Ahura Mazda answered. 'It rushes and sits near the skull, singing the Kima Gatha, O holy Zarathustra: "To what land shall I turn, O Ahura Mazda ? To whom shall I go with praying ?" '

" 'On that night his soul tastes as much of suffering as the whole of the living world can taste.'

"25. At the end of the third night, O Holy Zarathustra ! when the dawn appears, it seems to the soul of the faithful one as if it were brought amidst snow and stench, and as if a

wind were blowing from the regions of the North, a foul-scented wind, the foulest-scented of all the winds in the world.

"26-32. And it seems to the soul of the wicked man, as if he were inhaling that wind with the nostrils, and he thinks: 'Whence does that wind blow, the foulest-scented wind that I ever inhaled with my nostrils?'

"33. The first step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Thought Hell;

"The second step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Word Hell;

"The third step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Evil-Deed Hell;

"The fourth step that the soul of the wicked man made laid him in the Endless Darkness.

"34. Then one of the wicked who departed before him addressed him, saying: 'How didst thou perish, O wicked man? How didst thou come, O fiend! from the abodes full of cattle and full of wishes and enjoyments of love? From the material world into the world of the Spirit? From the decaying world into the undecaying one? How long did thy suffering last?'

"35. Angra Mainyu, the lying one, said: 'Ask him not what thou askest him, who has just gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress, where the body and the soul part from one another.'

"36. 'Let him eat of the food brought unto him, of poison and poisonous stench; this is the food, after he has perished, for the youth of evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds, evil religion, after he has perished; this is the food for the fiendish woman rich in evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, evil religion, ill-principled, and disobedient to her husband.'"

In the Avestic writings, we find much similarity to the vedic pantheon of the Hindus. For instance, Ahura Mazda is no other than Asura Varuna of the monotheistic vedic worshippers of ancient India. Varuna was the Ouranus of the Greeks. In the same manner it can be shown that the Zoroastrian Mithra (Greek Apollo) is the same as Mithra, the Sun God of the Vedas. The worship of Mithra has left great impression upon early Christianity. Again the Soma of the Vedas is described as Haoma in the Avesta. We also notice

that the vedic rain-god Indra has become the demon Andra. The Yama of the Vedas is the same as Yima of the Avesta. The Saurva of the Avesta is the same as Sarva or Siva of the Vedas. In short, the language of the Avesta is closely related to the ancient Sanskrit of the Rig Veda.

The Zoroastrian Scriptures, which are called the Zend Avesta, contain three parts: the first, Vendidad, a compilation of religious laws and mythical tales of ancient times; the second, Visperad, a collection of litanies for sacrifices; and the third, Yasnas, which consist of litanies of the same kind and of five Gathas or hymns. These Gathas were written in a more archaic dialect, older than the language of the Avesta. A great many of these books are lost.

Like the Pentateuch of Moses, the Avesta contains direct conversations between the Prophet Zarathustra, and his God, Ahura Mazda. As the religion of Jehovah was revealed to Moses, so the religion of Ahura Mazda was revealed to Zarathustra. As in Genesis we read the Lord Yahveh created this world in six days, so in the Avesta it is said that Ahura Mazda created this world in six periods. Adam and Eve of the Avesta are Mashya and Mashyana, the first man and woman created by Ahura Mazda. There is a deluge described in the Avesta, but with this difference from the Biblical story, that instead of Noah's Ark, an underground palace was built for the protection of all species.

Zoroastrianism teaches that Ahura Mazda, the one Supreme Lord of the universe, created man and gave him his body and mind. He nourishes and protects all. Man cannot do any good act alone by his will and intellect without the grace of the Lord, for his will and intellect are bound to the infinite will and infinite intellect. He is compelled as a delegated spiritual power on earth to maintain the righteous order of the world, and, therefore, he is responsible for his thoughts and deeds. Through good thoughts and righteous deeds he will eventually approach his Creator and will receive heavenly glory and eternal happiness.

The following quotation from the Zend Avesta (Vendidad, Fargard XIX), will explain this more clearly:

"27 (89). O Maker of the material world, thou holy One! Where are the rewards given? Where does the rewarding take

place? Where is the rewarding fulfilled? Whereto do men come to take the reward that, during their life in the material world, they have won for their souls?

"28 (90). Ahura Mazda answered: 'When the man is dead, when his time is over, then the wicked, evil-doing Daevas cut off his eyesight. On the third night, when the dawn appears and brightens up, when Mithra, the god with beautiful weapons, reaches the all-happy mountains, and the sun is rising:

"29 (94). Then the fiend, named Visaresha, O Spitama Zarathustra, carries off in bonds the souls of the wicked Daeva-worshippers who live in sin. The soul enters the way made by Time, and open both to the wicked and to the righteous. At the head of the Chinvad bridge, the holy bridge made by Mazda, they ask for their spirits and souls the reward for the worldly goods which they gave away here below.

"30 (98). Then comes the beautiful, well-shapen, strong and well-formed maid, with the dogs at her sides, one who can distinguish, who has many children, happy, and of high understanding.

"She makes the soul of the righteous one go up above the Haraberezaiti; above the Chinvad bridge, she places it in the presence of the heavenly gods themselves.

"31 (102). 'Up rises Vohu-man from his golden seat; Vohu-man exclaims: "How hast thou come to us, thou holy One, from that decaying world into this undecaying one?" '

"32 (105). Gladly pass the souls of the righteous to the golden seat of Ahura Mazda, to the golden seat of the Amesha Spentas, to the Garo-nmanem, the abode of Ahura Mazda, the abode of the Amesha Spentas, the abode of all the other holy beings.

"33 (108). 'As to the godly man that has been cleansed, the wicked evil-doing Daevas tremble at the perfume of his soul after death, as doth a sheep on which a wolf is pouncing.

"34 (110). 'The souls of the righteous are gathered together there: Nairyo-sangha is with them; a messenger of Ahura Mazda is Nairyo-sangha.' "

The Avesta tells us that the highest aim of our earthly life is to attain perfect happiness, which consists in the perfection of life, in the best or delightful thought, in the best or purest

soul, and in the best or glorified body; secondly, it lies in the sight, conference and companionship of Ahura Mazda. The means for attaining this everlasting happiness that is given in this religion is Asha or Holiness, which consists of two endeavours—to know God's will, and to act in harmony with it. Therefore, it is necessary for man to study the Scriptures, to observe the law, and to perform his duty to God, to his fellowman and to himself. This word Asha or Holiness includes all the principles of morality. It was so strongly emphasized by Zarathustra that it occurs in almost every chapter of the Zend Avesta. In fact, Holiness is the soul of Zoroastrianism. It teaches that holiness is happiness, and that is the most valuable gift of Ahura Mazda and it is the best offering to be presented to the Lord by the righteous.

Zoroastrianism is a religion of absolute faith, implicit confidence and unswerving devotion to Ahura Mazda. It is like the Bhakti Yoga, or the path of devotion in the dualistic phase of the universal religion of Vedanta. It inculcates constant prayers, offerings, sacrifices and thanksgiving by the devotee to the Lord. Whatever a devotee wishes to attain, he must earnestly pray for to Ahura Mazda, who will grant his demands. Therefore it is right to ask for knowledge, grace, forgiveness, happiness and blessings. "I cry unto Thee, O Lord! behold my condition, I ask of Thee help and grace as a friend asks of his friend. Reveal unto me through righteousness, the Good Mind's wealth." "As Thou, O Ahura Mazda! hast thought, spoken, created and done everything good, therefore do we offer to Thee, therefore do we ascribe to Thee our praises, worship Thee and bow before Thee with confessions of our debt."

There are prayers to purge away sins by repentance: "Of all my sins I repent with a *Patet*. For all evil thoughts, words and actions, which are ill thought, ill spoken and ill done in this world . . . .; for all sinful thoughts, sinful words and sinful deeds, for all bodily or earthly, mental or spiritual sins, I ask, O God, for forgiveness, and repent of them all with the three words."

Of all the Avestan prayers, *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha-Ahu-Vairyo*, are most important, and most frequently to be recited and often in quick succession. They are as follows: "May

Ahura Mazda be rejoiced !" *Ashem Vohu.* "Holiness is good ; it is the best of all good. Holiness is happiness. Happiness is due to him who is best in holiness.'

"I confess myself a worshipper of Mazda, a follower of Zarathustra, one who hates the Daevas and obeys the Law of Ahura."

Yatha-Aha-Vairya: "The will of the Lord is the law of holiness. As is the will of the Lord, the righteous person (is) in accordance with Divine order, an upholder of good-minded actions in this world for Mazda and (supporter of) the Kingdom for Ahura (on earth) which offers help and protection to the poor."

Charity is one of the cardinal virtues of Zoroastrianism. Sins can be atoned for, or expiated by charitable deeds. Kind treatment of animals is another virtue. The Avesta teaches: "Do not acquire the riches of the material world at the cost of the spiritual world. For he who destroys the spiritual world in order to obtain the riches of the material world shall possess neither the celestial light nor the Paradise of Ahura Mazda."

Zoroastrianism does not teach polygamy, but regards marriage as one of the most inviolable contracts. Children are considered as blessings and childlessness as a great curse, as a great punishment for having committed crimes. It upholds purity and cleanliness of the physical body, inculcates the sacredness of fire, water and earth, and describes purification ceremonies to purify these elements of nature.

According to the teachings of the Avesta, all dead bodies of the animals as well as of the human beings are impure, and for this reason the Zoroastrians are forbidden to pollute these sacred elements by burying or burning the dead bodies, or by throwing them into water. It teaches that it is sinful to burn or bury the dead, that the ground on which the dead matter lies is unfit for agriculture, that the ground of the grave is unclean and impure, and it does not become purified until fifty years have passed from the time when the corpse is buried. Therefore, the injunction of the Avesta for the disposal of the dead body is that the corpse should be placed high up in the air that it may be devoured by beasts and birds, and that not a particle of it must fall in water, earth or fire and thus pollute them. At first they used to lay the corpse on the summit of

a mountain upon stones, but now they build *Dakhmas* or 'Towers of Silence' for this purpose.

Zoroastrianism is not a system of philosophy, but a revealed religion of faith and devotion. It is not in harmony with modern science, which is based upon the theory of evolution, nor does it teach the reincarnation of souls. Ordinarily, it is called a religion of fire-worship, but in reality it does not teach the worship of fire, nor does it advocate nature-worship.

Sacred fire upon the altar in a temple is kept as a symbol which reminds the devotee of the glory of Ahura Mazda. It is regarded as the great purifier of all substances of nature and the giver of comfort. It is called *Atar* in the Avesta. *Atar* and *Asha* are most intimately connected with each other and for this reason a Zoroastrian invokes them together: "O Thou Spirit (God)! give us that joy and satisfaction through Thy *Atar* and *Asha*". Like fire, Mithra (sun) is regarded as the representative of the Lord. The Avesta says that Ahura and Mithra should be invoked together since Ahura Mazda is full of light and there is no darkness in His abode.

As the Hindus of the vedic age kept sacred fire in the temples, poured oblations in it and prayed to the supreme Lord of the universe facing the blazing fire, the rising or setting sun, so the followers of Zarathustra having descended from the same Aryan stock, have preserved the custom of their ancient forefathers and have handed it down to the Parsees of modern India. Those who have been in Bombay have noticed how the Parsees, standing on the seashore, repeat their prayers, and bend their knees in reverence before the setting sun. A Zoroastrian is strictly enjoined to face a luminous object or a beautiful flower at the time of this devotional exercises.

HYMN FROM THE YASNA-ZEND-AVESTA

We worship the Spirit Divine,
All wisdom and goodness possessing,
Surrounded by Holy Immortals,
The givers of bounty and blessing,
We joy in the works of His hands,
His truth and His powers confessing.

We praise all the things that are pure,
For these are His only Creation;
The thoughts that are true, and the words
And deeds that have won approbation;
These are supported by Him
And for these we make adoration.

Hear us, O Mazda! Thou livest
In truth and in heavenly gladness;
Cleanse us from falsehood, and keep us
From evil and bondage to badness;
Pour out the light and the joy of Thy life
On our darkness and sadness.

Shine on our gardens and fields,
Shine on our working and weaving;
Shine on the whole race of man,
Believing and unbelieving;
Shine on us now through the night,
Shine on us now in Thy might,
The flame of our holy love
And the song of our worship receiving.

The principal tenets of Zoroastrianism are summarized in the Catechism Mazdashna of the modern Parsees, thus: "What commands has God sent us through His Prophet Zarathustra?"

"Many are those commands of which these are the principal ones."

"To know God as one; to know the prophet, Zarathustra, as His true Prophet; to believe the religion and the Avesta brought by him, as true beyond all manner of doubt; to believe in the goodness of God; not to disobey any of the commands of the Mazdashna religion; to avoid all evil deeds; to exert for good deeds; to pray five times in the day; to believe in the reckoning and justice on the fourth morning after death; to hope for heaven and to fear hell; to consider doubtless the day of general destruction, and purification of all beings; to remember always that God has done what He willed, and shall do what He wills; to face some luminous object while worshipping God."

"What are those things by which man is blessed and benefitted ?"

"To do virtuous deeds, to give in charity, to be kind, to be humble, to speak sweet words, to wish good to others, to have a clear heart, to acquire learning, to speak the truth, to suppress anger, to be patient and contented, to be friendly, to feel shame, to pay due respect to the old and young, to be pious, to respect our parents and teachers ; all these are the friends of the good man and enemies of bad men".

Such are the teachings of Zoroaster, the great Prophet and Saviour of Iran.

CHAPTER IV

LAO-TZE AND HIS TEACHINGS

There are three religions in China—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism; or in other words, we may say that the religion of China inculcates the tenets of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. For nearly two thousand years these three have existed in perfect harmony, moulding the social, political, moral and religious ideals of nearly four hundred millions of people. Confucianism and Taoism are religions indigenous to the country, while Buddhism was introduced from India in the year 65 A.D. The founders of the former were Confucius and Lao-Tze, both of whom lived at the same time in the sixth century B.C. It is very remarkable to notice how the tremendous tidal wave of spirituality inundated the Asiatic Continent, revealing four great shining stars, the perfected souls on the highest crest of that spiritual wave: one in Persia, Zoroaster, the great Prophet of Iran, and the founder of Zoroastrianism; the second in India, Buddha, the great founder of Buddhism; while the third and fourth were in China. They all appeared almost simultaneously in the same spiritual cycle, brought Divine wisdom with them and afterwards became the moral and spiritual leaders among different nations. Each of them helped mankind by distributing that wisdom, and by founding the religion which was suited to the people among whom they flourished.

The two Chinese Prophets, Confucius and Lao-Tze, are not regarded as Saviours like Krishna and Buddha, but are known as great sages and philosophers. The teacher of Taoism was fifty-three years older than Confucius, but they met each other, and the substance of their conversation has been handed down to us by Chinese historians.

Unlike Confucianism, Christianity, Buddhism, or Mohammedanism, the religion of Taoism was not named after its founder, Lao-Tze. He was born in 604 B.C., in the third year of the reign of the Emperor Ting Wang, of the Cho dynastry. We do not know the name of his parents. Tradi-

tion says, "The master Lao was conceived under the influence of a star. When he received the breath of life we cannot fathom, but once when asked, he pointed to the plum tree (in Chinese Li), under which he was born, and adopted it as his surname. We do not understand whence came the musical sounds that were heard, but he kept his marvellous powers concealed in the womb of his mother for more than seventy years. When he was born, the hair of his head was already white, and he took the designation of Lao-Tze (Old Boy)." These words were inscribed in 586 A.D. by the Emperor Wan Ti on the stone tablet is the temple built in memory of Lao-Tze at his birth-place, in the village of Chu-Jhren, Li Country, belonging to the Ku province of the state Chu. It lies in the east of what is now the province of Honan. Besides this inscription on the stone tablet, we find a very brief account of Lao-Tze's life in the famous historical records, or Shi-Ki of Sze-ma-chien, the Herodotus of Chinese history. This Shi-Ki was completed in the year 91 B.C. We have still another short account of Lao-Tze's life, by his renowned follower, Chwang-Tze, who lived in 330 B.C.

Both these accounts say that the family name of this great Soul was Li (plum tree), and his name was Er (ear), but after his death he was called Tan, meaning (long lobed), long lobes being a sign of virtue. His appellation was Po Yang, or 'Count of Positive Principle'. He was popularly called Lao-Tze (the Old Boy, or Philosopher), which signifies 'One who remains childlike even when old'. Lao-Tze was one of the recorders at the Royal Court of Cho, and especially in charge of the secret archives, as state historian.

In the year 517 B.C., Confucius (who was then about 35 years old), went to the library of Cho in order to consult Lao-Tze on some ceremony regarding ancestor-worship. Referring to the ancestors, Lao-Tze said to Confucius:

"The men about whom you talk are dead, and their bones are mouldered in dust; only their words are left. If a nobleman finds his time he rises, but if he does not find his time he drifts like a roving plant, and wanders about. I observe that the wise merchant hides his treasures deeply and appears as if he is poor; and that the wise man, though his virtue be complete, assumes an attitude as though he were stupid. Put

away your proud airs, your many desires, your affectation and wild plans. They are of no advantage to you, Sir. This is all I have to tell you, Sir."

Hearing this, Confucius left, and being unable to grasp Lao-Tze's ideas, he said to his disciples: "I know how the birds can fly, fishes swim, and animals run; but the runner may be snared, the swimmer hooked, and the flier shot by arrow. But there is the Dragon—I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds and rises to heaven. Today I have seen Lao-Tze, and can only compare him to the Dragon."

The historian also says that Lao-Tze lived most of his life in Cho, cultivated the Tao and its attributes; and his chief aim was to keep himself concealed and unknown. But seeing the decay of the dynasty, he left Cho, and went away to the barrier gate leading out of the kingdom on the north-west frontier. There the custom house officer, Yin Hsi, said to Lao-Tze: "Sir, you are about to retire, let me request you to compose a book for me". To fulfil his request, the old philosopher wrote a book in two parts, setting forth his views on Tao and its attributes, in more than five thousand Chinese characters. Then he departed; no one knows where he died.

This is the whole of the historical account of Lao-Tze's life that we can get. Some European scholars, like Prof. Douglas, believe that Lao-Tze was a descendant of the western nation of the Chinese Empire, which may have had connection with India in ancient times. He also maintains that his peculiar long ear was the sign of his non-Chinese tribe, which inhabited the western frontiers of old China. His surname, Li, indicates that perhaps Lao-Tze descended from the important tribe of that name which was dispossessed by the invading Chinese, and was driven to seek refuge in south-western China. Furthermore, Prof. Douglas says: "However that may be, it is impossible to overlook the fact that he imported into his teachings a decided flavour of Indian philosophy." He goes so far as to say that Lao-Tze's Tao resembles the Brahman of Vedanta.

The teachings of Lao-Tze are contained in the book which he wrote himself in the sixth century B.C., and which is known as Tao-Teh-King. This title was given by Emperor Ching of the Han Dynasty, 156-143 B.C. He issued an imperial

decree that Lao-Tze's work on Tao and the Teh, which means the virtue or characteristics of Tao, should be respected as a canonical book or 'King'. Hence it is called Tao-Teh-King.

The term 'Tao' has been a subject of great discussion among different European scholars. Some have translated it as 'The Way'; others have called it 'The Eternal Word or Logos'; others again 'Eternal Being'. Some called it 'Reason', others say it is the same as 'Nature' of modern science. The Buddhists use the term 'Tao' for enlightenment, and so on. It literally means 'Path' or 'Way' or 'Method'. As the word 'Brahman' of Vedanta cannot be translated into English by one word, so there is no English term for 'Tao'.

Lao-Tze says Tao is One; it was in the beginning, and it will remain for ever. It is eternal and immutable, it is omnipresent, bodiless, immaterial and imperceptible by the senses. It is nameless and indescribable. We look at it and do not see it, and we name it the Equable; we listen to it, and do not hear it, and we name it the Inaudible; we try to grasp it and we do not get hold of it, and we name it the Subtle; with these three qualities it cannot be made subject of description, hence we blend them together, and obtain the One. It is called the mysterious abyss of Existence. It is the mother of all phenomena, of heaven and earth, it existed before the personal God. It is the producer of God, just as in Vedanta, we know that Iswara, or the personal God, is the first manifestation of the Brahman.

Tao is impersonal, yet it is individualized in all living creatures, especially in man. As in Vedanta, the Brahman, the Absolute Being, when individualized, is called the *Jivatman,* so Tao, or The Way of Heaven, when individualized, is called the Tao, or Way of Man. The Way of Heaven, and the Way of Man are far apart, yet they are one in reality. Chwang-Tze says: "What is it that we call the Tao? There is the Tao, or Way of Heaven; and there is the Tao, or Way of Man. Doing nothing and yet attracting all honour is the Way of Heaven; doing, and being embarrassed thereby, is the Way of Man. It is the Way of Heaven that plays the part of the Lord; it is the Way of Man that plays the part of the servant. The Way of Heaven and the Way of Man are

far apart. They should be clearly distinguished from each other."[1]

Thus the student of Vedanta will be able to understand the philosophy of Lao-Tze more easily than the majority of European scholars who do not know Vedanta. Tao is prior to God. Lao-Tze says: "I do not know whose son it is. It might appear to have been before God."[2]

"I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Tao (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great.

"Great, it passes on (in constant flow). Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns. Therefore the Tao is great; Heaven is great; earth is great; and the (sage) King is also great. In the universe there are four that are great, and the (stage) King is one of them.

"Man takes his law from the earth; the earth takes its law from the Heaven; the Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is its being what it is."[3]

"The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name."

"(Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of Heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things."[4]

It is difficult for Christians to believe that there can be anything that is prior to God; or in other words, that which is God's Ancestor or Father. But according to Lao-Tze, Tao is the Father of God. This idea we do not find in any other philosophy than Vedanta, which teaches that the Absolute Brahman which is nameless, formless, incomprehensible and yet the source of all phenomena, like the Tao, is prior to *Isvara,* the personal God.

Again, Tao manifests itself in the Laws of Nature. Tao is not merely an abstract principle, it is the object of awe and reverence. In an interview with Confucius, Lao-Tze spoke about Tao, as given in the texts of Taoism:

[1] Cf. *Sacred Books of the East,* Vol. XXXIX, p. 306.
[2] Cf. *Tao-Teh-King,* Ch. IV, Verse 3.
[3] Cf. *Tao-Teh-King,* Ch. XXV, Verses 2, 3, 4.
[4] Cf. *Tao-Teh-King,* Ch. IV, Verses 1, 2.

"When Confucius was in his fifty-first year, he had not heard of the Tao, and went south to Phei to see Lao Tan, who said to him: 'You have come, Sir; have you? I have heard that you are the wisest man of the North; have you also got the Tao?' 'Not yet', was the reply; and the other went on, 'How have you sought it?' Confucius said, 'I sought it in measures and numbers, and after five years I had not got it.' 'And how then did you seek it?' 'I sought it in the Yin and Yang, and after twelve years I have not found it.' Lao-Tze said: 'Just so! If the Tao could be presented (to another) men would all present it to their rulers; if it could be served up (to others) men would all serve it up to their parents; if it could be told (to others) men would all tell it to their brothers; if it could be given (to others) men would all give it to their sons and grandsons. The reason why it cannot be transmitted is no other but this—that if, within, there be not the presiding principle, it will not remain there, and if, outwardly, there be not the correct obedience, it will not be carried out. When that which is given out from the mind (in possession of it) is not received by the mind without, the sage will not give it out; and when, entering in from without, there is no power in the receiving mind to entertain it, the sage will not permit it to lie hid there. Fame is a possession common to all; we should not seek to have much of it. Benevolence and righteousness were as the lodging houses of the former Kings; we should only rest in them for a night, and not occupy them for long. If men see us doing so, they will have much to say against us.

"The perfect men of old trod the path of benevolence as a path which they borrowed for the occasion, and dwelt in Righteousness as in a lodging which they used for a night. Thus they rambled in the vacancy of Untroubled Ease, found their food in the fields of Indifference, and stood in the gardens which they had not borrowed. Untroubled Ease requires the doing of nothing; Indifference is easily supplied with nourishment; not borrowing needs no outlay. The ancients called this the Enjoyment that collects the True.

"Those who think that wealth is the proper thing for them cannot give up their revenues; those who seek distinction cannot give up the thought of fame; those who cleave

to power cannot give the handle of it to others. While they hold their grasp of those things, they are afraid (of losing them). When they let them go, they are grieved, and they will not look at a single example, from which they might perceive the (folly) of their restless pursuits: such men are under the doom of Heaven."

"Hatred and kindness; taking and giving; reproof and instruction; death and life:—these eight things are instruments of rectification, but only those are able to use them who do not obstinately refuse to comply with their great changes. Hence it is said, 'Correction is Rectification'. When the minds of some do not acknowledge this, it is because the gate of Heaven (in them) has not been opened."[5]

Chwang-Tze, the follower of Lao-Tze, says: "This is the Tao; there is in It emotion and sincerity, but It does nothing and has no bodily form. It may be handed down (by the teacher) but may not be received (by his scholars). It may be apprehended (by the mind), but It cannot be seen. It has its root and ground (of existence) in Itself. Before there were heaven and earth, form of old, there It was securedly existing. From It came the mysterious existences of spirits, from It came the mysterious existence of God. It produced heaven; It produced earth. It was before the primordial ether."[6]

Does this not remind one of similar passages of the ancient *Upanishads* which describe the nature of the Brahman?

Regarding Tao, Lao-Tze himself says that Tao produces all things, and nourishes them, it produces them and does not claim them as its own; it does all yet it does not boast of it; it presides over all, and does not control them. That is what is called the mysterious quality of the Tao.

"All things are produced by the Tao, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all things without exception honour the Tao, and exalt its outflowing operation."[7]

As the Brahman, or the Absolute, is the cornerstone of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta, so Tao, the Absolute and

[5] Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 354-357.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 243.
[7] *Tao-Teh-King*, Ch. LI, Verse 1.

the Eternal One is the fundamental principle of the philosophy and religion of Tao-Tze. The word 'God' (in Chinese 'Ti') is mentioned only once in Chapter IV, describing Him as posterior to Tao. Lao-Tze never identified Tao with God as his later followers have done. Furthermore, there is a great similarity in the methods of realizing the Tao as given by Lao-Tze, to those given in Vedanta, especially in Raja Yoga. Lao-Tze speaks of what is called in Raja Yoga *samadhi,* in these words: "The excellence of mind is in abysmal stillness." He also speaks of purity, kindness towards all living creatures, contentment, self-control, and higher knowledge as the means for attaining the Tao. Concentration and breathing exercises are also considered to be helpful in the path of Tao. Lao-Tze says: "When one gives undivided attention to the vital breath and brings it to the utmost degree of pliancy he can become as tender as a babe ; when he has cleansed away the most mysterious sights (of his imagination) he can become without a flaw."

Again he says: "He (who knows the Tao) will keep his mouth shut, and close the portals (of his nostrils), (the gates of the senses). He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things ; he will attemper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others). This is called the 'Mysterious Agreement'.

"(Such an one) cannot be treated familiarly or distantly ; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury ; of nobility or meanness ; he is the noblest man under Heaven".[8] Compare the above with the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita.*

Chawang-Tze says: "What is meant by 'the True Man?' The true men of old did not reject (the views of) the few ; they did not seek to accomplish (their ends) like heroes (before others) ; they did not lay plans to attain those ends. Being such, though they might make mistakes, they had no occasion for repentance ; though they might succeed, they had no self-complacency. Being such, they could ascend the loftiest heights without fear ; they could pass through water without being made wet by it ; they could go into fire without being burnt ; so it was that by their knowledge they ascended to and reached the Tao.

[8] Cf. *Tao-Teh-King,* Ch. LVI, Verses 2, 3.

"The true men of old did not dream when they slept, had no anxiety when they awoke, and did not care that their food should be pleasant. Their breathing came deep and silently. The breathing of the true man comes (even) from his heels, while men generally breathe (only) from their throats. When men are defeated in argument, their words come from their gullets as if they were vomiting. Where lusts and desires are deep, the springs of the Heavenly are shallow.

"The true men of old knew nothing of the love of life or of the hatred of death. Entrance into life occasioned them no joy; the exit from it awakened no resistance. Composedly they went and came. They did not forget what their beginning had been, and they did not inquire into what their end would be. They accepted (their life) and rejoiced in it; they forgot (all fear of death) and returned (to their state before life). Thus there was in them what is called the want of any mind to resist the Tao, and of all attempts by means of the Human to assist the Heavenly. Such were they who are called the true men".[9]

When love and enmity, profit and loss, favour and disgrace do not affect the sage—he becomes world-honoured. Does this not remind us of the sage described in the *Bhagavad Gita* by Krishna, 1400 B.C. ?

Lao-Tze, like Krishna, spoke of non-attachment to the works of the senses.

"The way of the Tao," says Lao-Tze, "is to act without thinking of acting; to conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them; to taste without discerning any flavour; to consider what is small as great, and a few as many; and to recompense injury with kindness."

Lao-Tze describes the heart of a holy man: "The holy man possesses not a fixed heart. The hundred families heart he makes his heart. He universalizes his heart and the hundred families fix upon him their eyes and ears. The holy man treats them as all his children. The holy man does not travel and yet he has knowledge. He does not see the things, and yet he defines them. He does not labour and yet he completes."

Lao-Tze taught self-restraint and renunciation. He says:

[9] Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 237-238.

"No greater sin than yielding to desire ; no greater misery than discontent ; no greater calamity than acquisitiveness."

As Christ said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you." So did Lao-Tze teach nearly 600 years before Christ, "Let the Eternal Tao have its way, and otherwise be heedless of consequences, for all will be well."

Virtue according to Lao-Tze meant: "To imitate in all things Heaven's Tao". Lao-Tze taught the virtue of simplicity in habits, saying: "Abandon your scheming ; put away your gains, and thieves and robbers will not exist".

"Hold fast to that which will endure,
Show thyself simple, preserve thee pure,
Thine own keep small, thy desires poor."

He taught his disciples: "Renounce learnedness, and you have no vexation".

According to Lao-Tze, the holy man or sage is he who manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech: "The multitude of men look satisfied and pleased, as if enjoying a full banquet, as if mounted on a tower in spring. "I alone," says Lao-Tze, "seem listless and still, my desires having as yet given no indication of their presence. I am like an infant which has not yet smiled".

Lao-Tze believed not in artificial modes of government by making strict laws, not in war, but in allowing nature to take its own course. He says: "I will do nothing (with purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves. I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich ; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity".

Lao-Tze requests the government simply to administer, and not to govern. He does not believe in its interfering with the natural development of the people, but he urges everybody to practise non-acting, non-meddling, non-interference. His ideal was: "The less laws and prohibitions there are, the less crime will there be. The less welfare of the people is forced by

artificial methods, the greater will be their wealth and prosperity".

Through this kind of Non-action (or "Wu-Wei" in Chinese) everything can be accomplished. Philo, the Neo-Platonist, conceived of God as "Non-action." He called God the "Non-actor". By this he did not mean that God is passive, but that He is the Absolute Existence. Indeed, God's activity does not mean exertion, as many people think, but it means "His Omnipresent Effectiveness".

Lao-Tze's philosophy exerted a strong influence on Tolstoi who regarded Non-action as a virtue and labour as a Non-virtue. Thus Lao-Tze's philosophy stands in strong contrast to the philosophy of Confucius. Confucius stood for good government, laws of propriety, good manners, but Lao-Tze did not believe in moralizing, but in natural spontaneity of the heart of the people, and independence. Confucius sought the favour of kings and princes, while Lao-Tze renounced them all. Confucius wanted to reform the external habits of life, but Lao-Tze wanted to reform the internal bent of the heart of the people.

"At an interview with Lao-Tan, Confucius spoke to him of benevolence and righteousness. Lao-Tan said: 'If you winnow chaff, and the dust gets into your eyes, then the places of heaven and earth and of the four cardinal points are all changed to you. If mosquitoes or gadflies puncture your skin, it will keep you all the night from sleeping. But this painful iteration of benevolence and righteousness excites my mind and produces in it the greatest confusion. If you, Sir, would cause men not to lose their natural simplicity, and if you would also imitate the wind in its (unconstrained) movements, and stand forth in all the natural attributes belonging to you!—"why must you use so much energy, and carry a great drum to seek for the son whom you have lost? The snow goose does not bathe every day to make itself white, nor the crow blacken itself every day to make itself black. The natural simplicity of their black and white does not afford any ground for controversy; and the fame and praise which men like to contemplate do not make them greater than they naturally are. When the springs (supplying the pools) are dried up, the fishes huddle together on the dry land. Then that they should moisten one another there by their gasping, and keep one another wet by their milt,

it would be better for them to forget one another in the rivers and lakes.' "[10]

Confucius taught the Golden Rule for the first time in China in the sixth century B.C., although it was inculcated in India by the vedic sages as well as by Krishna and other Saviours. [The Christians claim that Christ taught it for the first time, but the fact is that it was Rabbi Hillel (who died when Christ was ten years old), who preached it among the Jews for the first time.] Confucius, however, put the same idea in a negative form, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others". But Lao-Tze, like Krishna and Buddha, went beyond this in the field of ethics, by teaching "Return good for evil." When Confucius was asked by one of his disciples regarding the truth of this teaching of Lao-Tze, he replied: "What then will you return for good? Recompense injury with justice and return good for good." Hearing this Lao-Tze said: "The good I meet with goodness, the bad I also meet with goodness, for virtue is good throughout."

"There are three precious things", says Lao-Tze, which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentle compassion ; the second is economy ; the third is humility (not presuming to take precedence in the world). With gentle compassion I can be brave, with economy I can be liberal. Not presuming to claim precedence in the world, I can make myself a vessel fit for the most distinguished services." Indeed, Lao-Tze was a great Yogi!

Thus we see that Lao-Tze's philosophy inculcated the highest ethics, the purest method of living, and a grand discipline for mind and body. It had also the germ of a monistic religion, like that of Vedanta, although it was never developed in the same manner as it was in India.

The followers of Lao-Tze retired from the world, lived in caves and forests like the Yogis of India and practised the virtues taught by their Master. The list of the Taoist hermits in China is a very long one. They spent their lives in secluded retreats shut in by mountains, sheltered from the burning sun by the thick foliage of trees, striving to rise above love and hatred, pleasure and pain, and to attain to the original purity and simplicity of Tao. Even now there are to be found some

[10] Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 357.

Taoist hermits in the caves of the Mount of a Hundred Flowers. Their arms are crossed against their breasts and their nails have grown so long that they curl around their necks. Some of them are over three hundred years old, according to the Taoists of China.

Chwang-Tze, the renowned follower of Lao-Tze, was a great sage. He realized Tao, and interpreted the Master's ideas in his lucid and elegant style. He considered the world as a dream. He says: "How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion? And that the dislikes of death is not like a young person's losing his way, and not knowing that he is (really) going home. . . . Those who dream of (the pleasures of) drinking, may in the morning wail and weep; those who dream of wailing and weeping may in the morning be going out to hunt. When they were dreaming they did not know it was a dream; but when they awoke they knew that it was a dream. And there is a great awaking, after which we shall know that this life was a great dream."[11]

Does not this sound like the utterance of one who is a true Jnana Yogi? There is a very interesting story told of Chwang-Tze himself on his deathbed. At the last moment he requested his weeping relatives to leave his body uninterred. He said: "I will have heaven and earth for my sarcophagus, the sun and moon shall be the insignia where I lie in state, and all creation shall be mourners at my funeral". When his friends implored him to withdraw his request because the birds would mutilate his corpse, he smiled and said: "What matters that? Above are the birds of the air, below are the worms and ants; if you rob one to feed the other, what injustice is there done?"

Taoism did not begin to be a popular religion until after the introduction of Buddhism in China. At that time the pure teachings of Lao-Tze were mixed with all kinds of superstition, ancestor-worship, spirit-worship, pursuit of alchemy, search after the pills of immortality, black magic and sorcery. These corruptions are still very predominant in modern Taoism. Like the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and the Catholic Pope of Rome, Taoism has its Pope, whose name is Chang, and who is commonly called Chang Tien Shih, or Chang, the Heavenly

[11] Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 194-195.

Teacher. He is the Incarnation of the first Chang Tao-Ling, or Pope, who lived in the first century A.D. He has a palace in the province of Kianghsi, where he has all the comforts and luxuries of an actual sovereign. He is a great exorcist, and wards off evil spirits, many of whom he has bottled up in big jars kept in long rows in the palace.

As in Buddhist temples in China, there are images of three precious ones, *Buddha, Dharma* and *Samgha*; so in modern Taoism there are three pure or holy ones: the Perfect Holy One, the Highest Holy One, and the Greatest Holy One. The Perfect Holy One is the first. It represents something like God the Father, who presided over chaos at the beginning of evolution of the world. Here we should remember that Taoism does not believe in creation, neither in a Creator, but in evolution, and Tao is the starter of evolution, the transformer. The second of the Taoist Trinity is called The Highest Holy One, who is the most High Prince, Lao, the usual title of Lao-Tze. The third is the Greatest Holy One, or the great virtue of Lao-Tze and his teaching.

Taoism has borrowed from Buddhism this idea of Trinity as well as its form of worship, liturgies and temples with images which did not exist before the advent of Buddhism in China. Like Buddhism, Taoism has its monks and nuns who wear yellow caps. Taoism has also borrowed from Buddhism the idea of a Purgatory and of the reward and punishment after death and also the idea or rebirth. But Lao-Tze believed in the immortality of the soul and said: "He who dies and yet does not perish has longevity." He also advocated the theory of reincarnation or transformation of the soul after death. He never feared death, but called it a natural end of coming. The greatest of Lao-Tze's appeals was for self-conquest. As in Vedanta, self-conquest is considered as the highest virtue, so Lao-Tze says: "He who overcomes others is strong, but he who overcomes himself is mighty". According to Lao-Tze the realization of Tao through self-conquest is the attainment of salvation.

"The Heaven-honoured One says: 'Sincerity is the first step towards (the knowledge of) the Tao; it is by silence that that knowledge is maintained; it is with gentleness that (the Tao) is employed. The employment of sincerity looks like stupidity; the employment of silence looks like difficulty of

utterance; the employment of gentleness looks like want of ability. But having attained to this, you may forget all bodily form; you may forget your personality; you may forget that you are forgetting. He who has taken the first steps towards (the knowledge of) the Tao knows where to stop; he who maintains the Tao in himself knows how to be diligently vigilant; he who employs It knows what is most subtle.

" 'When one knows what is most subtle, the light of intelligence grows (around him); when he can know how to be diligently vigilant, his sage wisdom becomes complete; when he knows where to stop, he is grandly composed and restful.

" 'When he is grandly composed and restful, his sage wisdom becomes complete; when his sage wisdom becomes complete, the light of intelligence grows (around him); when the light of intelligence grows around him, he is one with the Tao.

" 'This is the condition which is styled the True Forgetfulness;—a forgetting which does not forget; a forgetting of what cannot be forgotten.

" 'That which cannot be forgotten is the True Tao. The Tao is in heaven and earth, but heaven and earth are not conscious of It. Whether It seems to have feelings or to be without them, It is (always) one and the same.' "[12]

[12] Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XL, pp. 266-267.

CHAPTER V

BUDDHA AND HIS TEACHINGS

From the time of Krishna, the Hindu Christ, down to the present day, India has produced many sages, saints and spiritual leaders of mankind, among whom no one is so widely honoured, revered and worshipped by the vast majority of the civilized world as is the most illustrious founder of that great religion known as Buddhism. It is a religion whose followers now outnumber those of any other religion of the world, and the doctrines of which have brought peace and happiness to the souls of millions of suffering people in India, China, Tibet, Burma, Siam, Ceylon, Java, Sumatra and other countries. No other religious reformer has ever attained to such a height of spiritual glory during his life-time; no other Saviour has converted and guided so many souls in the path of righteousness, nor has left so many earnest followers and sincere disciples after him, as did this world renowned Saviour and Redeemer, known as Buddha, 'The Enlightened'. Like the word 'Christ', this Sanskrit term 'Buddha' is a title which was acquired by this great man after he had attained to the highest spiritual enlightenment and Divine wisdom. The word 'Buddha' literally means 'The Enlightened', but before enlightenment his name was Gautama Siddhartha.

Gautama Siddhartha was the only son of a powerful sovereign of Northern India, King Suddhodana of the Shakya tribe, who lived in the seventh century B.C. The capital of this reigning King was called Kapilavastu (now known as Padeira), and was the birth-place of Gautama. King Suddhondana lived a pure and virtuous life, always treading the path of righteousness. He married Maya (the daughter of Suprabuddha), a maiden whose character was equally pure and virtuous. It is said that the King being extremely desirous of having a noble and spiritual child, asked his queen, Maya Devi, (the Divine Maya) to live in retirement, leading a life of a holy virgin and not of a wife, for a period of thirty-two months. One night the Queen Maya Devi, who was untainted by desire

and immaculate, saw in a vision a huge white elephant, radiant with Divine glory. The rays of this symbol of a spiritual giant entered into her body and filled her whole being with ecstatic joy and blissful happiness. From that time on, she often used to see *devas* or angels around her, and in the year 624 B.C., on the day of the full moon in the month of Vaisakha, while in the garden of Lumbini, under a satin tree, she gave birth to a perfect child, as bright as the rising sun.

It is very curious that most of the legends connected with the birth of Buddha have a most remarkable resemblance to the legends regarding the birth of Jesus the Christ. It is said that when the Saviour Buddha was born, all the worlds were flooded with celestial light. The blind received their sight, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, the crooked became straight and the lame walked. Like that of Jesus the Christ, his birth was announced by a star, named in Sanskrit, *Pushya*. Immediately after his birth, princes and wise men came to see the child with offerings in their hands, and prostrating themselves before the new-born babe, showed their reverence to the future Saviour of mankind. The Queen-mother was extremely frightened at the commotion which the birth of her innocent child had created. At this time an aged woman came to implore the heavens to bless the child and to remove the doubts of his mother.[1]

Among those wise men, there came a holy sage, Asita by name, who may be compared to Simeon of Jesus. This aged seer, beholding the Prince and observing his signs, declared before the anxious King and Queen: "Banish all anxiety and doubt. The spiritual omens manifested indicate that the child now born will, by his powers, bring deliverance to the whole world. He will rule the whole world. He is born for the sake of all that lives." The hearts of the Royal parents were rejoiced

[1] It reminds one of the aged Prophetess Anna, who came to bless the baby Jesus, as is described in Luke, Chapter 2, verses 36, 37, 38.

"And there was one Anna, a Prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

"And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day.

"And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

at the comforting words of the hoary sage, and they named the child, Siddhartha (one who has accomplished the purpose of life). When he was only seven days old, the good Queen said to her sister, Prajapati-Gautami, "A mother who has borne a future Buddha, will never give birth to another child, I shall soon leave this world, and when I am gone, be thou a mother to my child, Siddhartha". Thus saying, she passed away. From that time Prajapati reared the boy.

Very little of the story of the early life of Siddhartha has been handed down to us, but we know that he was brought up as a Hindu Prince. He received a good education in ethics; in the various systems of philosophy, and religion of the Vedas, the most ancient Scriptures of the world. Those who have read *Light of Asia,* by Sir Edwin Arnold, will remember that from his childhood he was surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of an Oriental monarch.

Having descended from the Royal line of the warrior caste, he easily acquired great skill in the use of various offensive and defensive weapons, and when he was about 18 years of age, Prince Siddhartha, by displaying his skill and by proving his superiority over his kinsmen in a Royal military tournament, won the hand of the beautiful Princess Yashodhara, the daughter of the King of the Koliya tribe. He was afterwards married to this princess, and for nearly ten years, the young Royal couple lived happily and enjoyed all the pleasures of life which their earthly existence could afford. But in the midst of this prosperity, position, wealth, comfort and luxury, the prince felt in his soul a strong yearning for something higher, which neither wealth, prosperity nor princely position could satisfy. Day after day, that fire of yearning burned stronger and stronger and made him more restless. One night when Prince Siddhartha was fast asleep, he was suddenly awakened by a dream in which he heard the *devas* (bright spirits) sing these words:

We are the voices of the wandering wind,
Which moan for rest, and rest can never find;
Lo! as the wind is so is mortal life,
A moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife.

Wherefore and whence we are ye cannot know,
Nor where life springs, nor whither life doth go;

We are as ye are, ghosts from the inane,
What pleasure have we of our changeful pain ?

What pleasure hast thou of thy changeless bliss ?
Nay, if love lasted, there were joy in this:
But life's way is the winds' way, all these things
Are but brief voices breathed on shifting strings.

O Maya's son! because we roam the earth
Moan we upon these strings: we make no mirth,
So many woes we see in many lands,
So many streaming eyes and wringing hands.

Yet mock we while we wail, for, could they know,
This life they cling to is but empty show;
'T were all as well to bid a cloud to stand,
Or hold a running river with the hand.

But thou that art to save, thine hour is nigh!
The sad world waiteth in its misery,
The blind world stumbleth on its round of pain;
Rise, Maya's child! Wake! Slumber not again!

We are the voices of the wandering wind:
Wander thou, too, O Prince, thy rest to find;
Leave love for love of lovers, for woe's sake,
Quit state for sorrow, and deliverance make.

So sigh we, passing o'er the silver strings,
To thee who know'st not yet of earthly Things;
So say we; mocking, as we pass away,
These lovely shadows wherewith thou dost play."[2]

Living in close confinement, as it were, within the four walls of his palace, Prince Siddhartha at first knew nothing of the hard struggle for existence that was going on outside of the palace walls, nor did he realize that the individual life consisted of a ceaseless fight against environments whose constant

[2] Cf. *Light of Asia*, pp. 51-52.

companions were misery, suffering, sorrow, unrest, disease and death. He was taught from his childhood to look upon life from the standpoint of an optimist, but after his dream, he grew eager to see the world and asked permission of his father, the King, to do so. King Suddhodana instantly gave orders to make ready a beautiful chariot decorated with precious jewels and drawn by four stately horses, and commanded the roads to be adorned with costly decorations where the Prince would pass. The houses of the city were decorated with festoons and garlands of beautiful flowers, banners and buntings, and crowds of people lined along both sides of the roads dressed in their best costumes of variegated colours, eager to see the heir to the throne.

"There they met an old man by the wayside. The Prince, seeing the bent frame, the wrinkled face, and the sorrowful brow, said to Chhandak, the charioteer: "Who is this ? His head is white, his eyes are bleared, and his body is withered. He can barely support himself on his staff.

"The charioteer much embarrassed, hardly dared to answer the truth. He said: 'These are the symptoms of old age. This same man was once a suckling child, and as a youth full of sportive life ; but now, as years have passed away, his beauty is gone and the strength of his life is wasted.

"Siddhartha was greatly affected by the words of the charioteer, and he sighed because of the pain of old age. 'What joy or pleasure can men take', he thought to himself, 'when they know they must soon wither and pine away !

"And lo! While they were passing on, a sick man appeared on the way-side, gasping for breath, his body disfigured, convulsed and groaning with pain. The Prince asked his charioteer: 'What kind of man is this ?' And the charioteer replied instantaneously: This man is sick. The four elements of his body are confused and out of order. We are all subject to such conditions. The poor and the rich, the ignorant and the wise, all creatures that have bodies, are liable to the same calamity.

"And Siddhartha was still more moved. All pleasures appeared stale to him, and he loathed the joys of life.

"The charioteer sped the horses on to escape the dreary sight when suddenly they were stopped in their fiery course. Four persons passed by carrying a corpse ; and the prince shud-

dering at the sight of a lifeless body, asked the charioteer: What is this they carry? There are streamers and flower garlands; but the men that follow are overwhelmed with grief!

"The charioteer replied: That is a dead man. His body is stark; his life is gone; his thoughts are still; his family and the friends who loved him now carry the cropse to the grave.

"And the Prince was full of awe and terror. 'Is this the only dead man', he asked, 'or does the world contain other instances?'

"With a heavy heart the charioteer replied: All over the world it is the same. He who begins life must end it. There is no escape from death.

"With bated breath and stammering accents the Prince exclaimed: O worldly men: how fatal is your delusion. Inevitably your body will crumble to dust, yet carelessly, unheedingly, you live on.

"The charioteer observing the deep impression these sad sights had made on the Prince, turned his horses and drove back to the city.

"When they passed by the palaces of the nobility, Krishna Gautami[3], young princess and niece of the King saw Siddhartha in his manliness and beauty, and, observing the thoughtfulness of his countenance, said: Happy the father that begot you, happy the mother that nursed you, happy the wife that calls husband this lord so glorious.

"The Prince hearing this greeting, said: Happy are they that have found deliverance. Longing for peace of mind, I shall seek the bliss of Nirvana. And handing her his precious pearl necklace as a reward for the instruction she had given him, he returned home."[4]

When he came face to face with the sufferings of humanity, his heart became heavy with sadness and his great soul was moved by unutterable compassion and sympathy at the first sight of old age, extreme poverty and the misery of disease and death. It was then that he awoke, as it were, from the sleep of optimistic self-delusion, and could no longer enjoy the luxuries of the artificial life of a Prince in the Royal palace. He resolved to quit his sweet home and his most beloved wife, in order to

[3] Kisa-Gotami.
[4] Cf. Paul Carus: *Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 12, 13, 14.

satisfy the secret longing of his aspiring soul. He felt keenly the fetters of his princely life.

It was at this time that a son was born unto him. Instead of rejoicing at this news, Prince Siddhartha, whose soul was struggling for freedom, exclaimed: "This is the new, and the strongest tie I shall have to break". His mind became more restless and more unhappy than ever before. He could no longer enjoy the blessings of worldly life, when his all-embracing heart was eagerly searching after a remedy which would remove the burden of sorrow, misery, disease and unrest from suffering humanity. That night he could not rest in his soft bed. He arose and walked out into the garden. There sitting under a great Jambu (Rose-Apple) tree Prince Siddhartha groaned with pain and meditated upon life and death. He tried to trace the source of the struggle for existence and to discover the causes of misery and suffering which prevail in this world. All worldly desires vanished from his mind and peace reigned over his soul. While he was absorbed in this state of ecstacy he beheld the majestic figure of a Bhikkhu (Shramana) under that Jambu tree. The Prince asked "whence dost thou come and who are thou?" The Bhikkhu replied: I am a Shramana, a mendicant. I have renounced the worldly life and have devoted myself to the path of deliverance from all misery, disease, decay, old age and death. This is the only way to peace and happiness. This is the path for you to follow. Go out, Siddhartha, and find the goal. Now is the right time for you to leave the palace and to lead the life of a Bhikkhu. You are a Bodhisattva now and you are destined to become the Buddha and to enlighten the world. Thus saying the Shramana disappeared. His words left a deep impression upon the heart of Siddhartha. He now resolved to leave the palace, wife and all the luxuries of a princely life. The prince returned to the bedroom of his wife and stood gazing at his beautiful wife who was asleep and the boy Rahula who was laying in her arms. Though his heart was overcome with terrible pain of parting, still his mind was determined to renounce everything for the sake of great deliverance from the evils of the world. Thus when all the members of the Royal family, his most faithful and devoted wife Yoshodhara and his loving child were fast asleep, prince Siddhartha silently walked out of the palace. He

mounted his faithful steed Kanthaka and finding the outer gates of the castle wide open he went out into the silent night accompanied by Chhandak the good charioteer.

Thus Prince Siddhartha, at the age of 29, renounced his claim to the throne, and all comforts and pleasures of the princely life not for any selfish motive, but for his extreme love for humanity. How could such a great soul enjoy the pleasures of life, when he realized that thousands were groaning under the unbearable burden of sorrow and suffering? How could he relish the delicious dishes of a prince, when he knew that in the world, hundreds of thousands were dying for want of a few morsels of bread? How could he sleep comfortably in a soft bed, when he saw that the bed of the poor was the bare ground with stones in the place of pillows? Do we ever feel for suffering humanity? No! Do the needs of the poverty-stricken classes touch our hearts? Very seldom indeed! Our thoughts and ideas are centred upon ourselves. We have made ourselves slaves of selfishness.

We feel happy when we get comfort for our bodies or for those of the families and children whom we claim as our own. Think of the vast difference that exists between the ordinary life of a worldly man and woman, and that of the self-sacrificing Prince Siddhartha, who could not feel himself happy, until he could make others truly so.

"T was not through hatred of his children sweet,
'T was not through hatred of his loving wife.
Thraller of hearts—not that he loved them less—
But Buddhahood more, that he renounced them all.

Thus having sacrificed his princely life with all its luxuries and enjoyments, Gautama Siddhartha, on his way to Rajagriha, alighted from his Kanthaka, cut off his flowing hair with his sword and exchanged his Royal robe for a plain cloth of the colour of the ground (ochre colour) which the *Sannyasis* use to wear. He bade Chhandak, the faithful charioteer to take home the noble mare Kanthaka and to give to King Suddhodana the message that the Prince had renounced the world. Next morning, dressed like a mendicant with a begging bowl in his hand Siddhartha walked along the high-road and entered the

city of Rajagriha. He silently went from house to house and people offered him food. People wondered who he was and what was his mission, for his erect gait and beautiful figure betrayed his royal birth though he was dressed like an ordinary beggar. Everybody bowed to him and gathered around him. Thus his presence created a great commotion in the streets of the city. The attendants of King Bimbisara brought the news that a great *Muni* (Sage) had come to his capital and people were flocking around him as their shepherd.

The King Bimbasara went himself to see the noble sage and found him seated under a tree. The King greeted him with reverence and said: "The beggar's bowl does not befit thee, thy hands should take the reins of an empire. I request thee to come to my palace and share my Royal power."

Shakyamuni who was absorbed in contemplation, lifted his eyes and looked at the King and replied: "Thou art a good King, and thy words are prudent. But I have renounced the world in search after deliverance. How can I return to the world ? I have discovered the illusory nature of wealth and of Royal power and have learnt that the fruit of holiness is better than sovereignty over the earth, than living in Heaven, nay better than Lordship over all the worlds. What is the preference of a dead king over a dead beggar ? I pray to thee do not try to entangle me again with the ties of the world." The King Bimbisara reverently bowed down before Shakyamuni and said: "Mayest thou obtain what thou seekest and having attained it mayest thou receive me as thy humble disciple."

Shakyamuni Bodhisattva parted from Bimbisara as a friend and went out of Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha, in search of a remedy for misery, sorrow, disease and death which prevailed in the world. He went to Vaisali and placed himself under the spiritual guidance of a great Brahmin philosopher Arada Kalama who had a large number of followers. He belonged to the *Sankhya* school of Kapila and laid great stress on the belief in a permanent and eternal soul, the *Atman*. Bodhisattva sat at his feet and listened to the doctrine of *Atman* which is the ego or "I" and the doer of all doings. Arada urged that the belief in an eternal immaterial Soul (*Atman*) is the only way to salvation or freedom from bondage. Like the *munja* grass when separated from its throny case or like the

wild bird when freed from its cage in which it is imprisoned, the Soul (*Atman*) when freed from the limitations (*upadhi*) would attain perfect deliverance (*mukti*). When the ego realized its immaterial nature it would become free and perfect. Arada reasoned this way: What is that the *Atman* which perceives the world of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing ? The *Atman* is the "I" who sees, hears, feels etc. This "I" is the permanent reality. True religion teaches how to liberate this "I" or ego or *Atman* through the path of purification. The life of a hermit depending entirely on alms for food is the best means for the purification of the heart. It should also be attended with the abandonment of all desires and the realization of the emptiness or non-existence of matter. Through this path the goal of perfect freedom and immortal life is reached.

Bodhisattva found no satisfaction in this doctrine, because he realized that people were in bondage on account of this illusory sense of "I" which was the source of all evil. Also because he realized that if the qualities of "I" or the *Atman* were stripped off and removed, the very existence of "I", or the *Atman,* would disappear, for the thing and its quality are different in our thought only, but not in reality. If the quality of heat, which is separate from fire in our thought only, be removed from the thing fire, then fire will be non-existent. That which men call the *Atman,* the ego or "I" is not an entity separate from its qualities or thought, understanding, sensation, disposition, etc. When the thought of "I", which stands between our rational nature and truth is banished, the real thing can be seen.. Bodhisattva then left Arada Kalama and placed himself under the guidance of another Brahmin teacher Udraka Ramaputra who belonged to the *Vaiseshika* school of Kanada. He also expounded the theory of a permanent "I", ego or *Atman,* but laid greater stress on the law of *karma* and transmigration of the souls.

Bodhisattva accepted the truth of the law of *karma,* but could not believe in the existence of a permanent soul which transmigrates. After deep meditation Bodhisattva discovered for himself the truth about the problems of *karma* and transmigration and said: "The law of *karma* is undeniable. What we sow we shall reap and what we reap in this life we must have sown in our previous lives. But I see no transmigration of

the "I". My personality: "I am so and so" is made up of qualities that sprang into being as a result of a combination both mental and material (*skandhas*) by the process of a gradual evolution. I have acquired five roots of sense perception in my organism from ancestors who performed the same functions and the ideas which I have now, were acquired partly from others who thought them, and partly they rise from combination of those ideas in my own mind. They are my ancestors in the same sense as I of yesterday am the father of I of today. There is rebirth but not the transmigration of "I", ego or *Atman* which is an illusion."

Bodhisattva found no satisfaction in Udraka's teaching and quitted him. Then he went to the temple priests and asked them the way of real salvation. His gentle and compassionate heart was horrified at the sight of the cruel sacrifice of the innocent animals on the altars of the gods for the expiation of sins. He exclaimed, "It is horrible to propitiate gods by shedding blood of the innocent animals. Can a new wrong expiate old wrong? How can the slaughter of a harmless victim take away the sins of another man? There is no truth in such a religion." Bodhisatta now realized that non-killing (*ahimsa*) was the best of all religions; that rituals and prayers were useless and incantations of *mantras* had no saving power. But the right sacrifice was the relinquishment of lust, covetousness, and evil passions, and to give up all hatred and ill will was the true worship.

Thus dissatisfied Bodhisattva went in search of a better system towards Uruvela, modern Bodh Gaya. There in the jungle of Uruvela he met five Bhikkhus, headed by Kaundinya, who were pupils of Udraka. These five ascetics were practising severe austerities (*tapas*) and penance to check their senses and subdue their passions. Bodhisattva admired their zeal and earnestness and joined their company. He gave himself up to mortification and contemplation. In the practice of severe penances Bodhisattva excelled them in every way and therefore he was revered by them as their master. For six long years he continued to torture his body without food and clothes, living under trees in pouring rain and in tropical sun-shine without having any shelter overhead. Thus suppressing the wants of nature he devoted himself to meditation and other exercises

of the most rigorous ascetic Yogi. For a long time he ate each day only one grain of barley or millet. At the end of this long struggle Bodhisattva's body was reduced to a skeleton and became shrunken like a withered branch. His body was so attenuated that when he touched his belly he could feel his backbone. The fame of his asceticism and holiness spread in the surrounding villages and people came from great distances to see him and receive his blessings.

But the holy one was not satisfied when he found that by self-mortification his body became weaker every day, still in his mind he could not find peace of salvation. He discovered that extreme penance was not the right path and then he resolved that he should strengthen his body by food and drink and make it fit for further struggle until the goal was reached.

With this resolution in his mind Bodhisattva went to bathe in the river Nairanjana (modern Falgu). But he was so weak that he fell down when he strove to get out of the water. Finding a branch of a tree nearby he took hold of it and raised himself up and left the water. But he could not walk back to his abode; he staggered and fell to the ground and was unconscious. The five ascetic companions thought that Shakyamuni was dead. At this time Sujata, the daughter of a chief herdsman living near the woods happened to pass by the spot where Bodhisattva had swooned. It was she who saved the life of the Blessed One by offering him rice-milk, which the Blessed One accepted. After he had eaten some of Sujata's rice-milk he felt refreshed and his mind became clear again. Now he felt strong enough to struggle further for the highest enlightenment. From this time he gave up fasting and other extreme methods of asceticism. The five Bhikkhus seeing this change in their master's practice, lost their confidence and turned away from him. When Bodhisattva wandered on alone the Bhikkhus explained: "Siddhartha leaves us to seek a more pleasant abode".

But the Blessed One was determined to continue his search after Truth by following the middle path. He went under the shade of the Bodhi tree and sat down alone in deep meditation.

At this time Maro Papima[5], the lord of the five desires and

[5] Maro Papima, which corresponds to the Mrityuh Papma of the Vedas,—the god of desire and death. The Tempter of Nachiketa of the

of death, and the greatest enemy of Truth came with his three daughters and a host of evil spirits, to tempt the Holy One. But the Blessed One remained calm and feared him not.

"Then fell the night even as our Master state
Under that Tree. But he who is the Prince
Of Darkness, Mara—knowing this was Buddh
Who should deliver men, and now the hour
When he should find the Truth and save the worlds—
Gave unto all his evil powers command.
Wherefore there trooped from every deepest pit
The fiends who war with Wisdom and the Light,
Arati, Trishna, Raga, and their crew
Of passions, horrors, ignorances, lusts,
The brood of gloom and dread; all hating Buddh,
Seeking to shake his mind; nor knoweth one
Not even the wisest, how those fiends of Hell
Battled that night to keep the Truth from Buddh:
.....stars shot from heaven,
The solid earth shuddered as if one laid
Flame to her gaping wounds; the torn black air
Was full of whistling wings, of screams and yells,
Of evil faces peering, of vast fronts
Terrible and majestic, Lords of Hell
Who from a thousand Limbos led their troops
To tempt the Master,
But Buddh heeded not.[6]

Having conquered Mara, and his attendants, Prince Siddhartha sat cross-legged under the Bo-tree on the banks of the Nairanjana river, in Bodh Gaya, with a firm determination in his mind to search after the truth and find the remedy for sorrow, suffering, disease and death, which the whole world was suffering from.

He exclaimed: "On this spot, let my body lie dried up; let the flesh, bones and skin be dissolved into atoms; still, without attaining the precious *Bodhi,* (the highest spiritual enlight-

Katha Upanishad may be compared to the Tempter Mara of Bodhisattva Gautama.

[6] Cf. *The Light of Asia,* pp. 157-165.

enment) which can hardly be acquired even after struggling for ages, I shall not move an inch—this is my firm determination".

The religion which he established and preached, depended upon the four noble truths which lead to Nirvana, the cessation of all sorrow, suffering, misery, disease, birth and death.

The first noble truth is the existence of suffering and sorrow in the world. Buddha said: "Birth is attended with pain, growth is sorrowful and decay is painful. Illness is sorrowful and death is sorrowful. Sad it is to be joined to that which we do not like. Sadder still is the separation from that which we love and painful is the craving for that which cannot be obtained".

The second noble truth is the cause of suffering. Buddha said: "The cause of suffering is lust. The surrounding world affects sensation and begets a craving thirst which clamours for immediate satisfaction. Verily it is the thirst (or craving), causing the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight seeking satisfaction, now here, now there; that is to say, the craving for the gratification of the passions, or the craving for a future life, or the craving for success in the present life. The desire to live for the enjoyment of self, entangles us in the net of sorrow. Pleasures are the bait and the result is pain".

The third noble truth is cessation of sorrow, which is meant by the word, Nirvana. "He who conquers self is free from lust. He no longer craves; the flame of desire finds no material to feed upon". Here you will notice, that desire was compared to a flame; when that flame of desire and lust is extinguished the state of Nirvana is reached.

This can be accomplished by following the fourth noble truth, which is the eight-fold path that leads to Nirvana. The eight-fold path is: (1) right comprehension; (2) right resolution; (3) right speech; (4) right acts; (5) right way of earning a livelihood; (6) right efforts; (7) right thoughts; (8) right state of peaceful mind; this is the *Dharma*; this is the truth; this is the religion. These four great truths which gave foundation to his religion, Buddha preached among the masses.

After attaining to Buddhahood, he remained in solitude for fortynine days enjoying the bliss of emancipation. Buddha was again tempted by Mara, who came and stood beside him

and addressed him, saying: "Pass away now, Lord, from existence! Now is the time for the Blessed One to pass away!" But Buddha replied: "I shall not die, O Evil One, until not only the brethren and sisters of the Order, but also the lay disciples of both sexes, shall have become true hearers, wise and well-trained, ready and learned, versed in the Scriptures, fulfilling all the greater and lesser duties, correct in life, walking according to the precepts—until they, having thus themselves learned the doctrine, shall be able to give information to others concerning it, preach it, make it known, establish it, open it, minutely explain it, and make it clear—until they, when others start vain doctrines, shall be able to vanquish and refute them, and so, to spread the wonder-working truth abroad! I shall not die until the pure religion of truth, shall have become successful, prosperous, widespread and popular in all its full extent—until in a word, it shall have been well proclaimed among men!"

Thus three times did Mara approach me in former years. And now, Ananda, Mara, the Evil One, came again today to the place where I was, and standing beside me, addressed me in the same words: 'Pass away, Lord, from existence'. And when he had thus spoken Ananda, I answered him and said: "Make thyself happy; the final extinction of the Tathagata shall take place before long."[7]

The Tathagata has found the middle path. "Neither abstinence from fish or flesh, nor going naked, nor shaving the head, nor wearing matted hair, nor dressing in a rough garment, nor covering oneself with dirt, nor sacrificing to Agni, will cleanse a man who is not free from delusions.

"Anger, drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deception, envy, self-praise, disparaging others, superciliousness and evil intentions constitute uncleanliness; not verily the eating of flesh.

"Let me teach you, O Bhikkhus, the middle path, which keeps aloof from both extremes. By suffering, the emaciated devotee produces confusion and sickly thoughts in his mind. Mortification is not conducive even to worldly knowledge; how much less to a triumph over the senses!

"He who fills his lamp with water will not dispel the darkness, and he who tries to light a fire with rotten wood will fail.

[7] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 208-209.

"Mortifications are painful, vain and profitless. And how can anyone be free from self by leading a wretched life if he does not succeed in quenching the fires of lust.

"All mortification is vain so long as self remains, so long as self continues to lust after either worldly or heavenly pleasures. But he in whom self has become extinct, is free from lust; he will desire neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures, and the satisfaction of his natural wants will not defile him. Let him eat and drink according to the needs of the body.

"Water surrounds the lotus-flower, but does not wet its petals.

"On the other hand, sensuality of all kind is enervating. The sensual man is a slave of his passions, and pleasure-seeking is degrading and vulgar.

"But to satisfy the necessities of life is not evil. To keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to trim the lamp of wisdom and keep our mind strong and clear.

"This is the middle path, O Bhikkhus, that keeps aloof from both extremes."[8]

Buddha then went to the deer park at Banaras to preach the gospel of truth, and he gained many followers. Whoever came into contact with the blessed conqueror of Mara and heard his words of wisdom, took refuge with his teachings and became his disciple.

Buddha said: "Wide open be the doors of immortality to all who have ears to hear. May they receive the *Dharma* with faith."[9] He preached the middle path which keeps aloof from mortification and sensuality.

Buddha said to his disciples: "Happy is he who has overcome all selfishness; happy is he who has attained peace; happy is he who has found the truth.

"The truth is noble and sweet; the truth can deliver you from evil. There is no saviour in the world except the truth."[10]

He preached many sermons and spoke to all in these words:

[8] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha,* pp. 39-40.
[9] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha,* p. 36.
[10] *Ibid,* p. 42.

"Here is no distress...no tribulations. Come to me and I will teach you the truth and the truth will dispel your sorrows."[11]

His teachings regarding charity, morality and compassion for all creatures are unparalleled:

"The charitable man is loved by all; his friendship is prized highly; in death his heart is at rest and full of joy, for he suffers not from repentance; he receives the opening flower of his reward and the fruit that ripens from it.

"Hard it is to understand: By giving away our food, we get more strength, by bestowing clothing on others we gain more beauty; by founding abodes of purity and truth, we acquire great treasures.

"There is a proper time and a proper mode in charity; just as the vigorous warrior goes to battle, so is the man who is able to give. He is like an able warrior, a champion, strong and wise in action.

"Loving and compassionate, he gives with reverence, and banishes all hatred, envy and anger.

"The charitable man has found the path of salvation. He is like the man who plants a sapling, securing thereby the shade, the flowers and the fruit in future years. Even so is the result of charity, even so is the joy of him who helps those that are in need of assistance; even so is the great Nirvana."[12]

Buddha preached renunciation and non-attachment and spoke in parables:

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me." In those who harbour such thoughts, hatred will never cease.

"For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love; this is an old rule.

The world does not know that we must all come to an end here; but those who know it, their quarrels cease at once.

He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle and weak, Mara (the tempter) will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree.[13]

"The evil-doer mourns in this world and he mourns in the

p.

[11] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 63-64.
[12] Cf. *Dhammapada*, p. 7. verses, 3, 5, 6, 7.

next; he mourns in both. He mourns and suffers when he sees the evil (result) of his own work.

The virtuous man delights in this world and he delights in the next; he delights in both. He delights and rejoices when he sees the purity of his own work.

The virtuous man is happy in this world, and he is happy in the next; he is happy in both. He is happy when he thinks of the good he has done; he is still more happy when going on the good path."[14]

Fools follow after vanity, so also men of evil design. The wise man keeps earnestness as his best jewel.

Follow not after vanity, nor after the enjoyments of love and lust. He who is earnest and meditative, obtains ample joy.[15]

"Those who bridle their mind which travels far; moves about alone; is without a body and hides in the chamber of the heart, will be free from the bonds of Mara the tempter."[16]

If one man conquers in battle, a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquers himself, he is the greatest of conquerors."[17]

Parable of the Lost Son.

"There was a householder's son who went away into a distant country, and while the father accumulated immeasurable riches, the son became miserably poor. And the son while in search of food and clothing, happened to come to the country in which his father lived. And the father saw him in his wretchedness, for he was ragged and brutalized by poverty, and ordered some of his servants to call him.

When the son saw the palace to which he was conducted, he thought: "I must have evoked the suspicion of a powerful man, and he will throw me into prison". Full of apprehension he made his escape before he had seen his father.

Then the father sent messengers out after his son, and he was caught and brought back in spite of his cries and lamentations. And his father ordered the servants to deal tenderly

[14] *Dhammapada*, p. 7, verses 15, 16, 18.
[15] *Ibid*, p. 10, verses 26 & 27.
[16] *Ibid*, p. 12, verse 37.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 31, verse 103.

with his son, and he appointed a labourer of his son's rank and education, to employ the lad as a help-mate on the estate. And the son was pleased with his new situation.

From a window of his palace, the father watched his boy, and when he saw that he was honest and industrious, he promoted him higher and higher.

After many years, he summoned his son, and called together all his servants, and made the secret known to them. Then the poor man was exceedingly glad, and he was full of joy at meeting his father.

Little by little, must the minds of men be trained for higher truths."[18]

The Parable of Buddha the Sower:

Bharadvaja, the wealthy Brahman, was celebrating his harvest thanksgiving, when the Blessed One came with his alms-bowl, begging for food.

Some of the people paid him reverence, but the Brahman was angry and said: "O Shramana, it would suit you better to go to work than to go begging. I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat. If you did likewise, you, too, would have to eat."

And the Tathagata answered him and said: "O Brahman, I, too, plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat."

"Do you profess to be a husbandman?" replied the Brahman. "Where then, are your bullocks? Where is the seed and the plough?"

The Blessed One said: "Faith is the seed I sow, good works are the rain that fertilizes it; wisdom and modesty are the plough; my mind is the guiding rein; I lay hold of the handle of the law; earnestness is the goad I use; and exertion is my draught-ox. This ploughing is ploughed to destroy the weeks of illusion. The harvest it yields is the immortal life of Nirvana, and thus all sorrow ends".

Then the Brahman poured rice-milk into a golden bowl, and offered it to the Blessed One saying: "Let the teacher of mankind partake of the rice-milk, for the venerable Gautama ploughing that bears the fruit of immortality".[19]

[18] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 160.
[19] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 173.

Parable of the Woman at the Well:

"Ananda, the favourite disciple of Buddha, having been sent by the Lord on a mission, passed by a well near a village and seeing Prakriti, a girl of the Matanga caste, he asked her for water to drink.

Prakriti said: "O Brahman, I am too humble and mean to give you water to drink, do not ask any service of me lest your holiness be contaminated, for I am of low caste".

And Ananda replied: "I ask not for caste but for water", and the Matanga girl's heart leaped joyfully and she gave Ananda to drink.

Ananda thanked her and went away; but she followed him at a distance.

Having heard that Ananda was a disciple of Gautama Shakyamuni, the girl repaired to the Blessed One and cried: "O Lord, help me and let me live in the place where Ananda thy disciple dwells, so that I may see him and minister unto him, for I love Ananda."

And the Blessed One understood the emotions of her heart, and he said: "Prakriti, thy heart is full of love, but you do not understand your own sentiments. It is not Ananda whom you love, but his kindness. Receive, then, the kindness you have seen him practise unto you, and in the humility of your station practise it unto others."

"Verily there is great merit in the generosity of a king when he is kind to a slave; but there is greater merit in the slave when ignoring the wrongs which he suffers, he cherishes kindness and goodwill to all mankind. He will cease to hate his oppressors, and even when powerless to resist their usurption will with compassion pity their arrogance and supercilious demeanour.

"Blessed art thou, Prakriti for though you are a Matanga you will be a model for noble men and noble women. You are of low caste, but Brahmans will learn a lesson from you. Swerve not from the path of justice and righteousness and you will outshine the Royal glory of queen on the throne."[20]

[20] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 174-175.

Parable of the Marriage Feast in Jambunada.

There was a man in Jambunada who was to be married the next day, and he thought: "Might Buddha, the Blessed One, be present at the wedding".

And the Blessed One passed by his house and met him, and when he read the silent wish in the heart of the bridegroom, he consented to enter.

When the Holy One appeared with the retinue of his many Bhikkhus, the host, whose means were limited, received them as best he could saying: "Eat, my Lord, and all your congregation according to your desire".

While the holy men ate, the meats and drinks remained undiminished, and the host thought to himself: "How wondrous is this ! I should have had plenty for all my relatives and friends. Would that I had invited them all."

When this thought was in the host's mind, all his relatives and friends entered the house ; and although the hall in the house was small there was room in it for all of them. They sat down at the table and ate, and there was more than enough for all of them.

The Blessed One was pleased to see so many guests full of good cheer and he quickened them and gladdened them with words of truth, proclaiming the bliss of righteousness.

"The greatest happiness which a mortal man can imagine is the bond of marriage that ties together two loving hearts. But there is a greater happiness still: it is the embrace of truth. Death will separate husband and wife, but death will never affect him who has espoused the truth."

"Therefore be married unto the truth and live with the truth in holy wedlock. The husband who loves his wife and desires for a union that shall be everlasting must be faithful to her so as to be like truth itself, and she will rely upon him and revere him and minister unto him. And the wife who loves husband and desires for a union that shall be everlasting must be faithful to him, so as to be like truth itself ; and he will place his trust in her, he will honour her, he will provide for her. Verily I say unto you, their wedlock will be holiness and bliss, and their children will become like unto their parents and will bear witness to their happiness.

"Let no man be single, let everyone be wedded in holy love to the truth. And when Mara, the destroyer, comes to separate the visible forms of your being, you will continue to live in the truth and you will partake of the life everlasting, for the truth is immortal."

There was no one among the guests but was strengthened in his spiritual life, and recognized the sweetness of a life of righteousness; and they took refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* and the *Samgha*.[21]

During the forty-five years of his public life, from the time of his proclaiming this new religion, Buddha preached these noble truths amongst the masses; converted them by hundreds and made them belong to his new order. His new order did not recognize the distinction of caste or creed. Kings or beggars, the rich and the poor, sages and sinners, Brahmins and pariahs, all joined the order and hailed Buddha as their leader and rejoicingly followed the path laid out by him.

It was Buddha who, for the first time in the religious history of the world, established and organized the monastic life of purity and chastity among his disciples. When the fame of Buddha as the saviour reached its zenith, his aged father, his wife and son and his other relatives became his disciples, joined his order and followed his instructions. His wife Yashodhara became the first of the nuns of the Buddhistic Order, and his son Rahula became great leader among his disciple monks. Buddha left thousands of lay disciples who lived the life of virtuous householders, strictly obeying the *Dharma* or the ethical laws of this new religion and recognizing Buddha as the Saviour of the world.

Buddha taught his lay disciples to obey and honour their parents and to follow an honourable trade or profession. The duties and relation of children and parents; of husbands and wives; of friends and companions; of masters and servants; of pupils and teachers; of laymen and devotees, which were laid down by Buddha, were in perfect harmony with the injunctions of the ancient ethical teachings of Vedanta.

He taught: "Hatred is not conquered by hatred, but by love. This is the eternal law". "Let one overcome anger by

[1] Cf. *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 180-182.

love, evil by good; the avaricious by generosity and the liar by truth." Such was the religion of benevolence and love preached by Buddha, the Hindu teacher, nearly five centuries before Jesus the Christ was born. These great truths were also illustrated by stories and parables, some of which have been quoted in the foregoing pages.

THE GOAL

And the Blessed One thus addressed the Bhikkhus:

"It is not through understanding and grasping the four noble truths, O Bhikkhus, that we have had to run so long and to wander in this weary path of transmigration, both you and I.

"The soul migrates through all forms, from the stone, through plants and all kinds of animal bodies, through men of various characters, until it reaches perfect enlightenment in the Buddha.

"All creatures are what they are through the *karma* of their deeds done in former and in present existences.

"The rational nature of man is the spark of enlightenment, which however, once procured, will remain a lasting possession. But new births are required to insure a transmigration to the summit of existence where the unmeasurable light is gained which is the source of all righteousness.

"Having attained this higher birth, I have found the Truth and taught you the noble path that leads to the glad city of peace.

"I have shown you the way to the Lake of Ambrosia, which washes away all sin.

"I have given you the refreshing drink called the perception of Truth, and he who drinks it becomes free from excitement, passion, and wrong-doing.

"The very gods envy the bliss of him who has escaped from the floods of passion and has climbed the shores of Nirvana. His heart is cleansed from all defilement and free from all illusion.

"He is like unto the lotus which grows in the water yet not a drop of water adheres to its petals.

"The man who walks in the noble path lives in the world, and yet his heart is not defiled by worldly desires.

"As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so he cultivates good-will without measure among all beings.

"Let a man remain steadfastly in this state of mind, whether he is standing or walking, awake or asleep, suffering from sickness, or enjoying good health, living or dying: for this state of heart is the best in the world.

"He who does not see the four noble truths, has still a long path to traverse by repeated births through the desert of ignorance with its mirages of illusion and through the morasses of sin.

"But now they are grasped, the cause of further migrations and aberrations is removed. The goal is reached. The craving of selfishness is destroyed and the Truth is attained.

"This is true deliverance, this is salvation; this is heaven and the bliss of a life immortal."[22]

The religion of Buddha, like the ancient laws of the ascetic life of the Hindus, was based upon the idea of self-culture and self-restraint. On the eve of his death, Buddha recapitulated the entire system of self-culture under seven heads. They are known as the Seven Jewels of the Buddhist Law. They are as follows:

(1st) Four earnest meditations; i.e., the meditations on the body, sensations, the ideas and the reason.

(2nd) The four-fold great struggle against sin; that is, the struggle to prevent sinfulness; the struggle to control the sinful states which have arisen; the struggle to be good and the struggle to increase goodness.

(3rd) The four roads to saintship; that is, the four means, viz., the will, the exertion, the preparation and the investigation, by which Siddhi or saintly supernatural powers can be acquired.

(4th) The five moral powers.

(5th) The five organs of spiritual sense, viz., faith, energy, thought, contemplation and wisdom.

(6th) The seven kinds of wisdom; i.e. energy, thought, contemplation, investigation, joy, repose and serenity.

(7th) The noble eight-fold path. A critical examination

[22] *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 98-99.

will show that these seven jewels of the Buddhist Law are included in the eight steps of Raja Yoga which a student of Vedanta practises.

Buddha forbade his disciples to perform miracles. When Shariputra replied:

"An ordained disciple must not commit any unchaste act. The disciple who commits an unchaste act, is no longer a disciple of Shakyamuni.

"Again an ordained disciple must not take except what has been given to him. The disciple who takes, be it so little as a penny's worth, is no longer a disciple of Shakyamuni.

"And lastly, an ordained disciple must not knowingly and malignantly, deprive any harmless creature of life, not even an earthworm or an ant. The disciple who knowingly and malignantly deprives any harmless creature of its life, is no longer a disciple of Shakyamuni.[23]

These are the three great prohibitions.

Buddha added: "There is another great prohibition which I proclaim to you.

"An ordained disciple must not boast of any Superhuman perfection. The disciple who with evil intent and from covetousness boasts of a Superhuman perfection, be it celestial visions or miracles, is no longer a disciple of Shakyamuni.[24]

Buddha gave five commandments:

1st. Do not kill any living being.
2nd. Do not take what is not given to you.
3rd. Do not speak falsehood.
4th. Do not drink intoxicating drinks.
5th. Do not commit adultery.

Buddha forbade his disciples to be engaged in star-gazing etc.

"Star-gazing and astrology, forecasting lucky or unfortunate events by signs, prognosticating good or evil, all these things are forbidden.

"He who lets the heart go loose without restraint shall not attain Nirvana; therefore, must we hold the heart in check,

[23] *The Gospel of Buddha,* pp. 100-101.
[24] *The Gospel of Buddha,* p. 101.

and retire from worldly excitements and seek tranquility of mind.

"Eat your food to satisfy your hunger, and drink to satisfy your thirst. Satisfy the necessities of life like the butterfly that sips the flower, without destroying its fragrance or its texture.

"It is through not understanding and grasping the four truths, O brethren, that we have gone astray so long, and wandered in this weary path of transmigration, both you and I, until we have found the truth.

"Practise the earnest meditations I have taught you. Continue in the great struggle against sin. Walk steadily in the roads of saintship. Be strong in moral powers. Let the organs of your spiritual sense be quick. When the seven kinds of wisdom enlighten your mind, you will find the noble eightfold path that leads to Nirvana.

"Behold, O brethren, the final extinction of the Tathagata will take place before long. I now exhort you, saying: "All component things must grow old and be dissolved again. Seek ye for that which is permanent, and work out your salvation with diligence."[25]

He then announced his death to his disciples. He ate some food prepared by Chunda, a man of low caste (a worker in metals) and there fell upon him dire sickness, but the Blessed One mindful and self-possessed bore it without complaint and asked his disciples to come with him to Kushinagara. He asked Ananda to spread his robe under a tree for him as he needed rest. He pardoned Chunda, then the Blessed One perceiving that death was near, uttered these words:

"He who gives away, shall have real gain. He who subdues himself shall be free of passions. The righteous man casts off sin; and thus by rooting out lust, bitterness and illusion, do we reach Nirvana."[26]

He comforted his weeping disciples by saying, "I am not the first Buddha who came upon the earth, nor shall I be the last. Gautama Siddhartha will die, but Buddha will live, for Buddha is the Truth, and I have founded on earth the kingdom of truth, and truth cannot die. He who believes in truth and lives on it, is my disciple and I shall teach him. The truth

[25] *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 210-211.
[26] *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 215.

will be propagated and the kingdom of truth will increase for about five hundred years. Then for a while the clouds of error will darken the light, and in due time another Buddha will arise, and he will reveal to you the self-same eternal truth which I have taught you."

Ananda said: "How shall we know him ?"

The Blessed One said, "The Buddha that will come after me, will be known as Maitreya, which means, 'He whose name is kindness'."[27]

The last words of Buddha were:

"Behold now brethren, I exhort you saying, decay is inherent in all component things, but the truth will remain for ever. Work out your salvation with diligence" ! This was the last word of the Tathagata. Then the Tathagata fell into a deep meditation, and having lost consciousness, passed peacefully away.

"When the Blessed One entered Nirvana, there arose, at his passing out of existence, a mighty earthquake, terrible and awe-inspiring, and the thunders of heaven burst forth, and those of the brethren who were not yet free from passions, some stretched out their arms and wept, and some fell headlong on the ground, in anguish at the thought: "Too soon has the Blessed One died ! Too soon has the Happy One passed away from existence ! Too soon has the Light of the World gone out ![28]

Thus ended the glorious life of Buddha the Enlightened. His body was cremated by his followers and his bones were kept untouched for seven days and all the disciples and members of his Order, gathered around them and paid honour, reverence, respect and homage to them with dance, song and music ; with incense, garlands of flowers and perfumes.

It is said that his remains were divided into eight portions and were distributed among his followers in different parts of India. Mounds and stupas and temples were erected over those remains, and those were the places for worship, for prayer and meditation, as well as for pilgrimage. Statues of Buddha were

[27] *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 217-218.
[28] *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 221-222.

erected and placed upon the altars over the relics; smaller images were placed in the shrines and chapels of the monasteries where people used to gather to show their reverence to him as also to worship his revered memory, to repeat his name and to pour forth the prayer of their souls, with the deepest feelings of devotion and love.

Buddha performed many miracles, such as resuscitating the dead, healing incurable diseases, and walking on the surface of the river Ganges, crossing that mighty current of over a mile in width. He was tempted by Mara three times in the same manner as was Jesus of Nazareth by Satan. But by his superhuman powers Buddha conquered Mara, the devil or Satan of Buddhism. All these miraculous deeds and marvellous superhuman powers, made his disciples and followers adore, revere and worship him as the living manifestation of Divinity among them.

It is true that Buddha did not preach God, neither did he discuss the nature of the *Atman,* the individual soul, nor did he care for heaven, although his religion was purely a religion of humanity, and for humanity, based entirely upon ethical laws, although it was a religion of self-conquest and of the victory of righteousness over unrighteousness, still his disciples and followers could not help recognizing in Buddha, the living manifestation of Divinity. They bowed down before him, prayed to him and reverentially repeated his name at the time of devotion, and asked for his help in time of distress, and within fifty years after his death, he was deified and worshipped as the Lord of the universe, and the Saviour of mankind. The human minds cannot rest content without having some direct and tangible object of worship.

As in the course of time among the Christians, Christ became not only their master and Ideal, but the living Incarnation of Divinity, so among the Buddhists of the pre-Christian era, Buddha stood for their Master, Saviour, nay as the embodiment of Divinity and the Redeemer of the world.

Although Buddha's last words to his disciples were: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves; be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth and work out your own salvation." Still in course of time, the personality of

Buddha became the lamp and the refuge, the truth and the bestower of salvation.

Gradually Buddha became the first person of the Buddhist Trinity. This Trinity consists of *Buddha, Dharma* or the laws of this religion, and *Samgha* i.e., the order of the Buddhistic community, somewhat similar to the idea of the Church among the Christians.

Every Buddhist whether a monk, a nun or a householder, should in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon and in the evening, salute and meditate upon this blessed Trinity, should repeat the formula: "I take refuge in Buddha ; I take refuge in his *Dharma* or his teachings, and I take refuge in his order." They should never violate any of these three in thought, word or deed."

The Buddhists believe that there is no more reverent worship than that of these three honourable ones, three jewels, and that there is no higher road to perfect knowledge than meditation on the four noble truths, which I have already described.

They also say that the meaning of the Truths is so profound, that it is beyond the comprehension of uncultured minds, but the worship of the holy image of Buddha is practicable for all. Furthermore they say, that though the great teacher has entered Nirvana, yet his image exists, and we should worship it with zeal as though in his very presence.

The Buddhists believe that those who constantly offer flowers and burn incense before the holy image of Buddha, are enabled to purify their thoughts, and those who perpetually bathe his holy image are enabled to overcome their sins. Those who devote themselves to this work, receive invisible rewards, and those who advise others to perform it, are doing good to themselves as well as to others, therefore it is desired by the Buddhists that those who wish to accumulate religious merit, should set their minds on performing these deeds.

The four noble truths, however, were not introduced by Buddha for the first time. At least two centuries before his advent, Kapila, the founder of the *Sankhya* school of philosophy and father of the evolution theory in India, inculcated the same truths in the same manner, showing that there is suffering in the world, tracing its cause to lust and desire, describing

that deliverance from all kinds of suffering, misery, birth and death, is the highest ideal of life, and in the end pointing out the path which leads to such emancipation.

The religion of Buddha may therefore be said to be an outgrowth of the *Sankhya* system. As Kapila denied the existence of a personal God, who is called the creator and governor of the universe, so did Buddha. Buddha was the greatest free-thinker and religious reformer of his time. He rejected the authority of the Scriptures, stood against priest-craft, the caste system and other social evils that prevailed at that time, denounced animal sacrifices as inhuman, disdained worship and devotion to God, and ridicule prayers as useless and unnecessary. He avoided philosophical discussions and metaphysical debates. His sole aim was to see his followers walking in the path of righteousness, obtaining control and mastery over passions and desires, and thus escaping the law of *karma* and reaching the destination of Nirvana, the cessation of birth, sorrow, suffering, disease and death. When asked by his disciples what the state of Nirvana was like, whether it was a positive or negative state, Buddha said: "There is, Oh disciple, a state where there is neither earth nor water, neither light nor air, neither infinity of space, nor infinity of reason, nor absolute void, nor the extinction of perception and non-perception; and neither this world, nor that world, sun and moon. That, Oh disciple, I term neither coming nor going nor standing, neither death nor birth. It is without basis, without possession, without cessation, that is the end of sorrow—that is Nirvana".

Can ordinary minds grasp what Buddha meant by such a state? The keenest intellect and subtlest understanding of a philosopher fail to comprehend the meaning. Even the minds of the most advanced disciples of Buddha, were staggered and confounded many a time, in their attempts to get a clear conception of this state of Nirvana, the highest ideal of Buddhism. Some of his followers thought that it must be the state of absolute negation; others believed it to be the total annihilation of everything that exists in the universe. Some of them understood that it was a state of perfect void, others maintained that it was absolute non-existence or destruction of Self (*Atta*).

After the death of Buddha and his direct disciples, the difficulty of understanding what he meant by Nirvana, was felt

more keenly by his later followers than ever before. There arose four schools of Buddhist philosophies. The first was of the extreme nihilists. They interpreted Nirvana as the realization of the utter emptiness of the world and of the blissful nothingness and extinction which was considered the highest end and aim of life. While the other three schools believed that he meant the annihilation of self, and of the universe, and the permanent abiding of abstract thought in itself. These Buddhists maintained the permanence of abstract thought, but not of any thinker. The idea of ego-entity as permanent, was considered by them to be an illusion. Here we shall not forget that Buddha kept perfect silence about the question whether or not the individual soul was permanent. This reticence created more confusion in the minds of his followers, and gave them ample opportunity to indulge in all kinds of guess-work. The great problem, however, as to whether Buddha's idea of Nirvana was a positive or a negative state has remained undecided to the present day, even among the Buddhists themselves.

The story of agnosticism and nihilism of the Buddhist philosophers of the fifth and sixth centuries after Christ, swept away from the minds of the people, the idea of Supreme Being of the universe, who is the omnipotent creator and omniscient ruler of all phenomena, as well as the idea of an immortal and indestructible Soul entity which remains after the death of the body, and reincarnates, enjoys or suffers and reaps the fruits of works and attain in the end, a positive state of absolute bliss and happiness.

That storm ultimately produced a tremendous wave of reaction in the ocean of religious thought of India, and resulted in the revival of the more rational philosophy and religion of Vedanta, through the wonderful powers of logic and reasoning and ability of Sankaracharya the greatest exponent and commentator of the Vedanta philosophy, who lived in the 7th century, A.D. He has been recognized in India as the embodiment of divine wisdom, and the personification, as it were, of true philosophy and logic. His reasoning and arguments have been greatly appreciated in the West by such philosophers as Schopenhauer and Deussen, and scholars like Prof. Max Müller. It was he who gave a death blow to Buddhism in India. by

pointing out the falacies and errors in the Buddhist philosophy. Thus he saved India from demoralization and spiritual degeneration which were brought about by the corrupted agnosticism, atheism and nihilism of the Buddhist philosophers of the 6th century A.D.

From that time, Buddhism after reigning in India for nearly 1000 years, gradually disappeared ; it was driven out of the land of its birth, and was forced to live outside of India among the peoples of such countries as China, Japan, Tibet, Burma and Ceylon where there was neither any philosophy nor any religion based upon higher principles.

Since the time of this great revival of vedantic thought which began in the 7th century A.D., the religion of the Hindus has been re-established upon the rational and truly philosophical doctrines of Vedanta. Through the teachings of Vedanta, the spiritual aspirations for Divine communion of a permanent and immortal individual soul, have once more found their way towards a satisfactory fulfilment. The Godless philosophy and the soulless psychology of Buddhism, have been supplanted by the sublime philosophy which standing upon the rock of immutable Truth, declares that the beginning, middle and end of the phenomenal universe is the all-pervading and omniscient Divinity, which dwells in every being, which is the soul of our souls, in which we live, through which we exist and without which there would be and could be nothing. That Divinity is called in Vedanta, the Brahman, the Essence of all existence ; the infinite source of intelligence and the indestructible basis of life and consciousness, the abode of eternal happiness where there is neither sorrow, suffering nor death. Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent soul-entity which we designate as doer, agent, thinker and enjoyer, which is subject to birth and re-birth. According to Buddhist psychology, there is not any being is born, that acts, thinks, enjoys and suffers. But birth, action, thought, enjoyment and suffering take place. Man's soul consists of sensations, impressions, ideas, memory-forms, thought-forms and deed-forms. It reminds one of the similar conclusions arrived at by the nihilistic Scotch philosopher, David Hume, of the 18th century.

Buddhism teaches the rebirth of the *karma*, i.e., of the character of thought-forms and deed-forms, but it denies that

reincarnation of the soul-entity of the being who is the thinker and the actor which has been so logically established by the Vedanta philosophy. The Buddhist writers say that when a living being dies, a new being is produced according to the *karma* or deeds of the being that is dead, and they often compare the relation of one life to the next as that of the flame of a lamp to the flame of another lighted by it. Vedanta refutes the idea of rebirth by saying that if there were no permanent soul-entity, the ever-changing impressions, ideas etc., will never be held together in such a harmonious way. If there were no actor or sufferer, how can there be a permanent seeker after Nirvana or salvation from suffering ? And where will be the identity of the man who suffers with the man who is dead, if there is no soul ?

The nihilistic teachings of Buddhism can be summed up in four lines:

"Misery only doth exist, none miserable.
No doer is there ; naught save the deed is found.
Nirvana is, but not the man who seeks it.
The path exists, but not the traveller on it."

Vedanta, on the contrary, teaches that the soul or ego is the doer, actor, thinker, sufferer, seeker after peace and bliss. It is like the permanent thread which connects the thought-forms, memory-forms, sensations, ideas, feelings and harmoniously brings them together and keeps them in their proper places. It is the same ego that suffers, seeks also the cessation of sorrow and misery. It is the same individual soul that appears as born, continues to exist after death and reincarnates in another form. This is the most vital point in which Vedanta differs from Buddhism. Furthermore, Vedanta teaches that the individual ego, being a reflection or image of the Universal Spirit, its true nature is immortal, unchangeable and divine,—nay, one with the Brahman, the Supreme Being of the universe. Buddhism denies the reality of the universe, and calls it the result of illusion, while Vedanta teaches that the reality of the universe is that Absolute Being, the Brahman, which is the Soul of our souls.

Buddhism is pessimistic. It sees evil in everything and teaches that the sooner this evil ceases to exist, the better it is for us all, while Vedanta tells us to see the Divinity, the Absolute Unchangeable Reality everywhere. When this real-

ization comes, through the knowledge of our Divine nature, the soul attains to Nirvana, because it then rises above all delusions, sorrow, suffering disease and death, transcends the law of *karma* and reincarnation and remains as perfect and one with the Divine Being, the Brahman, for ever.

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST AND HIS TEACHINGS

Jesus the Christ is worshipped in Christendom as the incarnation of the Heavenly Father and as the greatest Saviour of mankind. It is believed that he was born on the 25th of December of a Virgin Mother at Bethlehem about two thousand years ago, and his birth was the fulfilment of the prophecies of old Jewish prophets and of the promise of Yahveh, the Lord of the House of Israel. It is said that after man's first disobedience and fall from Paradise, the curse of the Lord fell upon Satan in the form that "the woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head" and crush the power of the devil. That curse, which contained in it the indirect promise of the Lord, became in the end a great blessing to the world and was fulfilled at the advent of the glorious Son of Man.

When Abraham went forth from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran at the Command of the Lord, he received the promise from Yahveh that in his seed all nations would be blessed and the same pledge was renewed to Isaac and Jacob, who at the time of his death declared that the Messiah should come. Moses, after delivering the law to his people, declared that a prophet like unto himself would be born from among his brethren. Balaam came to curse Israel but he changed his curse into a blessing when he saw the bright morning star, that is, the Christ, rising out of Jacob. It is said that King David foretold the miraculous birth, humiliation, cruel death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. In the *Song of Songs,* again, it is supposed that there is a description of the intimate union which Christ had with his Church and it is also believed that in the *Song of Songs* it was mentioned for the first time. Hosea predicted the return of the Son of God from Egypt and His resurrection after three days. Amos foretold the raising of the fallen tabernacle of David, and the prophet of Tekoa also predicted that the Messiah, the Son of God, would appear upon Mt. Zion. The unnatural experience of Jonah has been interpreted to symbolize the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Micah predicted the birth

of the Saviour in Bethlehem. So did Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel predicted the coming of the Messiah upon the clouds of Heaven. And Zechariah also foretold the coronation of the Branch, the Son of David; and Malachi predicted the advent of the forerunner and the Prince of the Lord. According to the orthodox belief, the advent of the Son of God, the Divine manifestation in the form of Jesus the Christ, was the perfect fulfilment of all these promises, prophecies and predictions.

In the fulness of time, the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary took place, and on the 25th of December was born in Bethlehem the only-Begotten Son of the Heavenly Father to deliver the world from sin and suffering and to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. A special star, heralding the advent of of the Lord, arose above the horizon in the east. The wise men seeing that star came to the spot where the newly-born babe was resting to adore him by addressing as the 'King of the Jews' and by offering him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

King Herod, after hearing all these things, was greatly troubled in his mind and with him the whole of Jerusalem, and when the king discovered that he was mocked by the wise men whom he had ordered to bring the news of the new-born Divine Child, he became extremely angry and sent for wicked men to destroy all children in Bethlehem and all along the coast thereof from two years old and under. In the meantime, Joseph, the husband of Mary, was roused one night from sleep by an angel, through whose advice he took the young Child and His mother and went away to Egypt, thus saving the life of the Redeemer of the world. After the death of the wicked King Herod, they returned to Galilee and dwelt in the City of Nazareth.

Such is the version given in Matthew; but the Luke narrator describes the decree of taxation by Caesar Augustus, the swaddling clothes, the manager, the announcement of the advent of the Lord and Saviour of the world by the angel to the shepherds in the field, praising of the Child by Simeon and the aged prophetess Anna, and so on. In the apocryphal gospels, various miracles are described which were performed by Jesus the Christ, when he was in Egypt. When Jesus was twelve years old, he displayed his Divine wisdom by answering the most difficult theological questions of the learned Jewish doctors and by asking them also questions on theology. After that, what

happened ? We do not know. The life of Jesus the Christ, for eighteen years is unknown to the world. We hear of him again when he was baptized. He was baptized by one who is regarded as the Incarnation of Elijah, but before this baptism where Jesus lived and what he did during this period is unknown, although it is thought by some that he went to India and studied there, while others believe that Jesus the Christ, went to Egypt. Persia, or Tibet. No historical proof, however, has yet been found to support those ideas.

At the time of Baptism, the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost descenced in bodily shape in the form of a dove over his head and a voice was heard from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Jesus was about thirty years old at that time. Then he appeared in public, but before he appeared in public he had returned from Jordan, and returning from Jordan he went into the wilderness and there he fasted for forty days and was tempted by the devil. Having conquered the devil, now he became the Master of the world and he went to Galilee and proclaimed his message in the synagogues, but the Jewish doctors did not receive him as their Messiah. Then he returned from Galilee to Nazareth and there he preached among the poor people, healed the sick, cast out devils, restored the sight and hearing of the blind and deaf, resuscitated the dead, walked upon the water, and performed many miracles among his disciples and followers. Thus he proved before the world that he was the True Son of the living God. Then he entered into Jerusalem seated on an ass's colt. There he was betrayed by one of his disciples. He instituted the memorial supper, and then he was crucified, having made a full confession of his Messiahship before Pontius Pilate. After three days he resurrected and appeared alive before his disciples. Jesus the Christ promised to come again upon the clouds of Heaven to establish the Kingdom of Heaven, to raise the dead, and to give to his devoted disciples the crown of everlasting life.

Such was the career of the glorious Saviour of Nazareth. That wonderful Redeemer, who is now worshipped in the world by millions and millions of people, lived such a short life—his life was not very long, but his life as far as we know was full of wonderful events. The wonderful character of that

sin-atoning Son of Man has not only become the object of reverence, veneration, love and devotion of millions and millions of people all over the world, but it has also been the source of consolation and comfort in the time of pleasure, distress, sorrow, misery and suffering. In his name, princes have renounced their treasures, husbands have forsaken their beloved wives and wives their beloved husbands; in his name, parents have deserted their beautiful children and children have deserted their parents.

Thousands and thousands of holy and pious souls have become martyrs for the sake of that glorious, self-abnegating Son of Man. The fire of vengeance was kindled by the zealous priests to protect the banner of his faith, and Galileo, Giordano Bruno and others were persecuted by the priests. What for? To protect his religion. Scientific researches were suppressed by the priests and clergy, by fire and sword, to keep the people in ignorance and in superstition and to make them serve their selfish desires and motives; but, in spite of all these good and evil deeds which were perpetrated in the name of Jesus the Christ and for the sake of his religion, today we are able to get a glimpse of the truth through the help of modern science.

The light of scientific investigation has now enlightened the intellects of many, and today we are able to examine the truths regarding those old prophecies and predictions and to ask whether Jesus the Christ, was a perfect fulfilment of all those old Jewish prophecies; whether the life of Jesus the Christ, as described in the Synoptic Gospels is historical or not; whether they were the historical records or mere traditions accepted and handed down by credulous people of that age. We all know, through the help of modern science and through geological researches, that the first appearance of man on this earth was not six thousand years ago, but in the Tertiary Period more than 200,000 years ago. By taking recourse to geological calculation what do we think of the temptation and fall of Adam today? It is nothing but a myth. The temptation and fall of Adam from Paradise is regarded by all scientific men as a myth. Similarly, the story of the deluge and Noah's Ark has been proved to be absurd and meaningless by Professor Huxley and others. They do not consider it as a real fact. We find a similar mythical story among the ancient Greeks in the story

of Deucalion, and the same story existed in Persia. A story of the deluge is recorded in the Zend Avesta and in the Chinese history you will find the narratives of deluge in their mythology. Among the Hindus the same story of deluge existed. Then, if we study the higher critics of the Bible, what do we find? Professor Bacon of the Yale University says that the earliest stories in Genesis were taken from prophetic legends, because they turn to the mass of tales and legends which were current in the eighth or ninth century before Christ. For instance, he says regarding Abraham: "The figure of Abraham is purely and simply the type of the prehistoric Israel brought by Yahveh from a far off country in the East to inhabit the land of Canaan". Furthermore, the learned Professor says that the Abraham of the New Testament could not have been a historic figure. If there was not, it would be like the ideal heir of Yahveh, and this Abraham existed in the minds of the Jewish prophets and seers, and that is the Father Abraham. The higher critics of the Bible today deny that Moses gave the law to his people; they deny that Moses wrote the five books of Pentateuch. Who wrote them? Nobody knows. Through proper investigations, they have discovered the truths, the facts.

The prophecies of Balaam concerned the Judaic kingdom in the Assyrian period. It is now proved that David did not write the Psalter and there is no reference in any psalm to the expected Messiah. The *Song of Songs* has been proved, not to be an allegory of the love of Jesus the Christ for his church, but to be an erotic poem describing the love of a man and a woman. In fact, none of the Jewish prophets who lived before the Babylonian exile ever referred to the Messiah; they did not have any conception of a Messiah as the spiritual Saviour of the world. The Jews never accepted such a Messiah, but they had the idea of a Messiah as an earthly king, not a spiritual Lord of the universe.

Hosea did not speak of the resurrection, but he reproached some of his contemporaries who thought that the evils of a nation could be cured in two or three days. Probably Jonah never had such an unnatural experience. And the first conception of a Messiah as the spiritual Saviour of the world we find in the Persian scriptures, the Zend Avesta. In the conception of Zoroaster who, according to the prophets of Ahura Mazda,

would come in future to destroy the evil influence of Ahriman (who was the same as Satan in Christianity), that Messiah would come to renovate the world and to establish the kingdom of Ahura Mazda once more. These conceptions were accepted by the Parsees during the Babylonian Captivity which lasted for about fifty years, from 587 to 539 B.C., but the orthodox Jews repudiated these ideas and the Sadducees never accepted them. They thought they were foreign and they had nothing to do with them.

As regards the time and place of the birth of Jesus the Christ, there has been much difference of opinion. The popular belief is that Jesus the Christ, was born on the 25th of December, in the reign of King Herod, when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria, and when (according to Luke) Caesar Augustus decreed the taxation of the whole world, but history tells us differently. History says that Cyrenius was not appointed to this post until long after the death of Herod, during whose reign (according to Matthew) Jesus the Christ, was born. And, again, the taxing which is mentioned in Luke did not take place until ten years after the time mentioned, and therefore Eusebius, first of the ecclesiastical historians, places the date of the birth of Jesus the Christ in 10 A.D. ten years after the time accepted by ordinary people. The Institution of the festivity of the nativity of Jesus Christ is ascribed to Tellesphorus, who lived in the reign of Antonius Pius, between 138 and 161 A.D., but more certain traces we do not find until in the reign of the Emperor Commodus, who lived between the years 180 and 192 A.D. At that time, there was a great discussion regarding the exact time when Jesus the Christ, was born and various attempts were made to fix the exact date of his birth and those attempts resulted in the acceptance by some the 20th of May and by others the 19th of April and the 5th of January, until afterwards it was decided by the community of Rome that the 25th of December was the date of the birth of Christ. Even this date was not accepted in general until the 5th century A.D., and this is the historical record. It is for this reason that the Latin churches observe the birthday of Jesus on the 25th of December, the Greek churches twelve days later, and the Armenian churches still twelve days later. If we go to Bethlehem, the home of Christ-

mas, we shall find that this festival is continued for the whole month and different sects of Christians celebrate it at different times. So there is a whole month of Christmas, and it will be interesting to you to know that the Mohammedan soldiers, who are devoted followers of Mohammed, keep peace amongst the different sects of Christians while they are celebrating this holy festival in Bethlehem.

Whether we know the exact date of the birth of Jesus matters very little. Although there is no historical record of the precise time, year, month and day, and the place where Jesus the Christ was born, although there is no historical record regarding the early miraculous events of the life of Jesus the Christ; still we cannot help believing in the ideal life and exemplary character as depicted in the synoptic gospels as of one who was, not only the Son of God, but the divine incarnation, manifestation of that Supreme Deity who is the Lord of the universe and God of all nations. We cannot deny this fact. If we read in the Bible the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ, we believe that he was the Incarnation of Divinity. When and where he was born, we do not know; but still we believe in him through the writings of these great gospelmakers. The students of Vedanta do not care whether the personality of Jesus was historical or not, whether he was born of the Virgin Mary or of another virgin or not, whether he was the fulfilment of the prophecies of the old Jewish Prophets or of the promise of Yahveh, the tribal God of the house of Israel, or of the Messianic object of the Jewish people; but the students of Vedanta regard him, with his sublime character and wonderful powers, as an Incarnation of the Logos, the Eternal Word of God, as in the case of all other Saviours of the world. The Eternal Word which dwelt in Heaven with the Lord is the Logos, and that Logos appeared in the form of Jesus the Christ, in the form of Krishna, of Zoroaster, Buddha and all other Saviours of the world. The students of Vedanta regard him as the Incarnation of Divinity, as the Son of God, as the Saviour of the world.

Jesus the Christ lived the same simple life, always trusting the Lord, and without thinking of the morrow, as was lived by Buddha, Krishna and other vedantic seers and sages of ancient times, and his wonderful career had shown to the world

that he possessed divine powers and he manifested those powers through his acts. From his childhood, he lived in Godconsciousness and he realized that intimate relation which exists between the individual soul and the Heavenly Father. He proved to the world by his glorious works that he was the embodiment of purity and righteousness and that he was the personification of divine wisdom and divine powers. We cannot deny this. By his unique career, renunciation and self-denial and his sacrifice, he has conquered the hearts of all the spiritually-minded people among all nations and has taught them how to live the life of blessedness, how to work for others, how to live and to die for the good of humanity; he has lived a life which stands as an example before all the seekers after spirituality. The disinterested love for humanity which was shown by Jesus the Christ, was unique, and following his example we must try to love all human beings; nay, all living creatures, as Buddha said. We must show that in our lives, we must follow the path of Jesus the Christ, in that universal love. It is for this reason that Vedanta accepts the ideal of Christ and presents it before the world, before all the seekers after spirituality and asks them to follow the path of Jesus the Christ, to be like Christ, to live the life of Jesus the Christ, and to obey his teachings, worshipping him as the Saviour of mankind and the Redeemer of the world.

In whatsoever heart the Christ ideal is accepted, there is sown the seed of charity, self-denial, renunciation, control of passions, universal love and faith in God. These are the cardinal virtues of the religion of Jesus the Christ, and there in fullness of time the tree will surely grow, bearing the fruit of the realization of that oneness with the Heavenly Father which was expressed by Jesus the Christ in his famous saying: "I and my Father are one". What He said, we must realize, each one of us. By following the example of Jesus the Christ, each one of us will be able to say in the same way, "I and my Father are one." If we cannot do this, we are not followers of Jesus the Christ. The moment that we shall be able to do it, to realize that truth which was explained by Jesus the Christ, then we shall be able to call ourselves the true disciples of our master, and not until then. When the cave of the human soul will be illuminated by the Divine light and glory of the newly-

born Spiritual Christ, when our hearts will be filled with that light, then the spiritual self of the true devotee will enjoy the blessings of spiritual Christmas and understand the true meaning of Trinity by realizing the oneness of his individual soul with the Heavenly Father through the state of superconsciousness. Jesus the Christ, used to commune with the Lord by entering into the state of superconsciousness, by rising above this material plane, by forgetting the earthly existence; and when we shall be able to do the same, then the birth of Spiritual Christ has taken place in our souls, then the spiritual Christmas will spread its glory within us and all around us. That is the time for rejoicing.

The external Christmas is only a form, but let us understand the spirit of Christmas and let us understand the meaning, and that spirit and that meaning we can only grasp through the sublime teachings of Vedanta which harmonize with the teachings of Jesus the Christ, and through Vedanta we shall be able to realize the spiritual ideal Christ within ourselves and become one with the Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER VII

CHRIST AND CHRISTMAS

Jesus the Christ has been worshipped in Christendom as the Incarnation of the Father in Heaven and as the greatest Saviour of mankind. It is believed that twenty centuries ago, on the twenty-fifth of December, this wonderful Redeemer was born of a virgin at Bethlehem as the fulfilment of the prophecies of the old Jewish Prophets as well as of the promise of Yahveh, the Lord of the house of Israel.

It is said that after man's first disobedience and fall from Paradise, the wrath of the Lord fell upon Satan in the form of a curse that the woman's seed would bruise the serpent's head and crush the devil's power.[1] That curse which contained the indirect promise of the Lord became in the end a great blessing to the world and was fulfilled at the advent of the glorious Son of Man. When Abraham went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, obeying the command of God, he received the promise from the Lord that in his seed all nations would be blessed.[2] The same pledge was renewed to Isaac,[3] and to Jacob[4] who prophesied at the time of his death that the Messiah should come.[5] Moses after delivering the Law to his people declared that a prophet like unto himself would arise from among his brethren.[6]

Balaam came to curse Israel, but he changed his curse into a blessing when he saw the vision[7] of the Almighty, the bright morning star[8], i.e., the Christ rising out of Jacob. It is said that King David foretold the miraculous advent, humiliation, cruel death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ (Psalms of

[1] Gen III. 14, 15.
[2] Gen. XII. 2, 3, 7; XVII. 4, 6; XXII. 18.
[3] Gen. XXVI. 3.
[4] Gen. XXVIII. 14.
[5] Gen. XLIX. 25.
[6] The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;—Deut. XVIII. 15.
[7] Num. XXIII. 20.
[8] Num. XXIV. 17.

David). Again in the *Song of Songs,* Solomon is supposed to have spoken of the intimate union between the Christ and his Church. Hosea is said to have predicted the return of the Son of God from Egypt and his resurrection on the third day. Amos foretold the raising of the fallen tabernacle of David[9], and the prophet Obadiah predicted: And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.[10] The unnatural experience of Jonah has been interpreted to symbolize the resurrection of the Son of Man. It is said that Micah prophesied the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem,[11] and so did Isaiah.[12] We are told that Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven. Jeremiah predicted in the words of the Lord saying: "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.....he shall be called 'The Lord of our Righteousness.'"[13] Ezekiel spoke of Christ as the one shepherd.[14] It is also said that Zechariah foretold the coronation of the Branch, the Son of David.[15] Malachi also predicted: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers...."[16]

According to the orthodox Christian belief, the Divine Manifestation in the form of Jesus the Christ came as a perfect fulfilment of all these promises, prophecies and predictions. In the fulness of time the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary took place, and early on the twenty-fifth of December in the city of Bethlehem was born the only Begotten Son of the Heavenly Father to deliver the world from sin and to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. A special star heralding the advent of the Lord appeared above the horizon in the East, seeing which wise men came to adore the new-born babe, addressed

[9] In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen.—Amos IX. 11.
[10] Obad. 21.
[11] Mic. V. 2.
[12] Is. IX. 6, 7.
[13] Jer. XXIII. 5, 6; also XXXIII. 15.
[14] Ezek. XXXVII. 24.
[15] Zech. VI. 12, 13.
[16] Mal. IV. 5, 6.

as King of the Jews, worshipped and offered him gifts—gold, frankincense, etc.

King Herod hearing these things was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. When he discovered that he was mocked by the wise men whom he had ordered to bring the news of the divine babe, he was extremely angry and he sent forth wicked men to destroy all the children in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under. But in the meantime Joseph, the husband of Mary, was aroused one night from his sleep by an angel, through whose advice he took the young child and its mother and departed to Egypt, thus saving the life of the future Redeemer of the world.

Then after the death of the wicked King Herod, they returned from Egypt to Galilee and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. Such is the version according to Matthew. But Luke mentions the decree of taxation from Caesar Augustus, the swaddling clothes, manger, the announcement of the birth of the Saviour by the angel to the shepherds in the field, the blessings from Simeon and from the Prophetess Anna, and so on.

The Apocryphal Gospels describe many miracles performed in Egypt by the young child Jesus. When he was twelve years old, Jesus displayed his wisdom by asking and answering questions of the learned doctors in Jerusalem. Then Jesus was baptized by one who was the incarnation of Elijah. It is said that at that time the heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven saying: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased". Jesus was about thirty years old at that time. Returning from Jordan he went into wilderness, fasted for forty days and was tempted by the Devil. Having conquered the Devil, Jesus returned into Galilee where he proclaimed his message in synagogues. From there he came to Nazareth, where he preached the Gospel among the poor, healed the sick, cast out the Devils, restored the sight and hearing of the blind and the deaf, resuscitated the dead and performed many miraculous deeds among his followers and disciples. Thus Jesus proved himself to be the Son of the living God. He entered Jerusalem seated on an ass's colt, was betrayed by one of his disciples, instituted the memorial supper, and was

afterwards crucified, having made a good confession of his Messiahship before Pontius Pilate. On the third day he resurrected and appeared himself alive to his disciples. Jesus promised to return upon the clouds of heaven to raise the dead, to establish his Kingdom and to give to his devoted followers the crown of everlasting life.

Such was the life of the most wonderful Saviour, who is worshipped today by millions and millions of sincere and earnest souls all over the world. The superhuman character of the sin-atoning Son of Man has not only been the object of veneration, reverence, love and devotion among the vast majority of mankind for the last two thousand years, but has become the source of comfort, consolation and happiness at the time of their distress and sorrow, misery and unhappiness. In the name of the Saviour Christ, princes have renounced their treasures, husbands have forsaken their wives, wives their beloved husbands, parents have deserted their dutiful children and children their loving parents. For the sake of that glorious, divine and self-abnegating Son of Man, thousands of martyrs have gladly given up their lives. The fire of inquisition was kindled by zealous priests to protect his religious banner. Thoughtful people who held their opinions against the popular beliefs of the churches, or dared to criticize the veracity of the scriptures have been most brutally persecuted by the followers of this great Saviour. For many centuries the scientific researches and investigations were suppressed by the power of sword and fire in order to preserve the superstition and ignorance of the faithful believers and devout worshippers of the Lord, Jesus the Christ.

But notwithstanding all these goods and evil deeds that have been perpetrated in the name of Christ and his religion, the light of scientific investigation has dispelled the darkness of ignorance and has helped the intellectual sight of many to examine the truths concerning the prophecies and predictions of the Jewish prophets of the pre-Christian era, and to question whether Jesus the Christ was truly the fulfilment of those prophecies, whether the statements of the writers of the Synoptic Gospels were historical or merely based upon the local traditions believed, accepted and handed down by the credulous people of that age.

We all know that the geological researches of this century have shown that the first appearance of man on earth was not six thousand years ago, but, in the Tertiary Period, which goes back beyond fifty thousand or one million years according to geological calculation. So the story of Adam, his temptation and fall is nothing but a myth. Similarly, the Biblical story of the Deluge and of Noah's Ark has been proved to be absurd and meaningless by Huxley and other scientists of the present age. A parallel for the story of Noah is to be found in the mythological story of Deucalion among the ancient Greeks, and the same mythical story of the deluge existed among the Zoroastrians, the Hindus and the Chinese of prehistoric times Professor Bacon of the Yale University says: "The earliest narratives of Genesis are already prophetic in character because they turn to the mass of folktale and legend current in the eighth or ninth century B.C." Regarding Abraham, for instance, the learned Professor says: "The figure of Abraham appears purely and simply as the type of prehistoric Israel brought from the far-off East by Yahveh to inhabit the land of Canaan". He also says: "The Abraham of the New Testament would not be the historic figure if there were one. It would be but the ideal heir of Yahveh. The true Abraham is the Ideal and this Abraham lived only in the mind of prophet and seer".

The higher critics of the Bible have shown that Moses did not give the Law nor did he write any of the books of the Pentateuch, ascribed to him; that the prophecies of Balaam concerned the Judaean Kingdom in the Assyrian period. It is proved now that David did not write the Psalter and that there is no reference in any Psalm to the expected Messiah. The *Song of Songs* has been proved not to be an allegory concerning the love of Christ for the church, but it is an erotic poem describing the love of man and woman.

In fact, none of the Jewish prophets who lived before the Babylonian Exile, ever referred to the Messiah. Hosea did not speak of the resurrection of Christ, but he rebuked some of his contemporaries who thought that the evils of the nation could be cured in two or three days.

Jonah probably never had such an unnatural experience. Nor did Isaiah speak of a virgin bearing a child. It can be shown that the conception of a Messiah as a Spiritual Saviour

of the world owes its origin to the Persian conception of Saoshyant who, according to the promise of Ahura Mazda, would appear on the Day of Judgement, destroy the evil influences of Ahriman, the same as the Satan of the Christianity and renovate the world. This idea was accepted by the Pharisees while the orthodox Jews repudiated it.

As regards the time and place of the birth of the Saviour, Christ, the accepted belief of the churches is that he was born on the twentyfifth of December at Bethlehem, during the reign of King Herod, when Cyrenius was the governor of Syria and when (according to Luke) Caesar Augustus decreed that all the world should be taxed. But history tells us that Cyrenius was not appointed to this office until long after the death of Herod, during whose reign Matthew the narrator informs us that Jesus was born. The taxing spoken of by Luke did not take place until ten years after the time mentioned.

Eusebius, the first ecclesiastical historian (264-340 A.D.), therefore places his birth in the year 10 A.D. Among early Christian churches there was no uniformity in the period of observing Christ's nativity. Some Christian writers fix 4 B.C. as the year when Jesus was born ; some 5 B.C. ; some again about 15 B.C., while, according to Basnage, the Jews placed his birth near a century sooner than the generally assumed epoch.

According to Irenaeus (A.D. 190) Christ lived for nearly fifty years. Rev. Dr. Giles says: "Concerning the time of Christ's birth there are even greater doubts than about the place." Rev. Dr. Geikie says: "Ewald appears to fix the date of the birth as five years earlier than our era. Petavius and Usher fix it as on the 25th of December, five years before our era ; Bengal, on the 25th of December, four years before our era ; Auger and Winer, four years before our era, in the spring ; Scaliger, three years before our era, in October ; St. Jerome, three years before our era, on December 25 ; Eusebius, two years before our era, on January 6 ; and Ideler, seven years before our era, in December."[17]

According to Canon Farrar, although the date of Christ's birth cannot be fixed with absolute certainty, there is at least a large amount of evidence to render it probable that he was

[17] Cunningham Geikie: *The Life and Words of Christ*, Vol. I, p. 559

born years before our era. But all attempts to discover the month and the day are useless.

Bunsen shows on the authority of Irenaeus that Jesus was born fifteen years before the time assigned. Others have placed it even in the third century B.C. As the year of the birth of Jesus is unknown so is the month or the day.

The institution of the festival of the Nativity of Jesus as being held on the 25th of December is attributed to Telesphorus, who lived during the reign of Antonius Pius (138-161 A.D.), but the first certain traces of it are found during the time of the Emperor Commodus (180-192 A.D.).

For a long time various attempts had been made to discover the exact time, but they resulted for some in the 20th of May, with some in the 19th or 20th of April and with others in the 5th of January. At last the opinion of the Community of Rome decided for the 25th of December, and it was not until the fifth century A.D. that this day was generally accepted.

For this reason the Latin Churches celebrate the Christmas festival on the 25th of December, the Greek churches twelve days after that, and the Armenian Churches twelve days later still. If we go to Bethlehem, the home of Christmas, we shall see that this festival practically lasts for one month, being celebrated by the different Christian sects at different times. It would be very interesting to know that Turkish soldiers who are devoted followers of Mohammed, should keep peace and prevent riots among the sectarian Christians while they are engaged in the celebration of their holy festival.

It would also be interesting for many to know how Christmas is celebrated at Bethlehem: "At two o'clock on the 24th of December a cavalcade passes out of Jerusalem through the Jaffa gate headed by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Royal representative of Rome. With him ride the French Consul to Jerusalem and a throng of bishops and priests. A smaller cavalcade comes out of Bethlehem to meet the former on the hill-tops and at 4 o'clock the then combined cavalcades enter through the narrow streets of Bethlehem to the open Market Square in front of the church. The Turkish soldiers clear the space into which the Patriarch and his attendants are received by the priests. There on a rich carpet the Patriarch stands, changes his travelling garments, put on rich ceremonial robes

and purple and ermine vestments, a purple cap. The bishops likewise put on rich garments and coloured robes. Fifty boys begin the Christmas Chant, the cross of the Patriarch is lifted and the procession enters the church under the protection of the Turkish soldiers. The priests celebrate the high mass in the afternoon and in the evening. At midnight the Patriarch approaches the altar and Partaking of the communion wine, begins the chant of the nativity. The Patriarch draws aside the little curtain over the high altar and reveals the image of the Child Christ, and the grand anthem of the glory to God is sung in a chorus by all. Then a third high mass follows which lasts until three o'clock in the morning. The second image of a child in the rough manger is produced by the richly robed priests who place it before the altar. The throng prostrates and another chorus of praise breaks forth. The procession led by the Patriarch goes to the grotto of the nativity, where a short service is held by the priests and the bells announce that the child is found." In the same manner the Greek and the Armenian churches celebrate the Christmas festival at Bethlehem.

In spite of all these are we sure that Jesus was born at Bethlehem ? The Bible says so ; but the first three Gospels were written nearly a century after the birth of Jesus, and the higher critics of the Bible, scholars and historians like Ernest Renan and others, maintain that Jesus was born at Nazareth, and not at Bethlehem. Thus it can be shown that the birth-place of Jesus is unknown. It is still undecided whether he was born in a house in Bethlehem, as Matthew describes ; or in a stable, as Luke says ; or in a cave within three miles from Bethlehem, as the Apocryphal Gospel Protegangelium describes, or at Nazareth, as Ernest Renan narrates.

Now let us see why the 25th of December was finally fixed as the birthday of Jesus. "At the first moment after midnight of the 24th of December, the ancient nations celebrated the accouchement of the queen of Heaven and Celestial Virgin, and the birth of the God Sol, the infant Saviour, and the God of Day." (Higgins). It was a time of great rejoicing in Persia, Egypt, Greece, India, China and other countries. In India, it is a time of merry-making everywhere, due to a great religious festival ; the people decorate their houses with garlands and

make presents to friends and relatives. In China at the time of the winter solstice all shops are shut and the courts are closed. Among the ancient Persians this day was kept as the birthday of their Lord and Saviour Mitthras. It was a time for great rejoicings.

The ancient Egyptians fixed 25th of March as the date when the Saviour Horus descended from the womb of Isis, the Virgin Queen of Heaven, and towards the end of December the birth of the Saviour was commemorated for centuries before the birth of Christ. The Egyptians not only worshipped a Virgin Mother before Christ was born but exhibited the effigy of her son in the manger.

The status of the Egyptian Madonna Isis holding the Sun God, Horus is to be found in ancient temples just as the Hindu Madonna Devaki held Krishna the Hindu Christ in her arms centuries before the time of Jesus.

Osiris, the son of the holy Virgin, was born on the 25th of December. The Greeks celebrated this day as the birthday of Hercules. Bacchus was born on the 25th and so Adonis. Thus Hercules, Osiris, Bacchus, Adonis, Horus, Mithras, every one of them was born of a virgin mother on the 25th of December, the day after the winter solstice.

The 25th of December was a great holiday in ancient Rome. Rev. Mr. Gross says: "In Rome before the time of Christ a festival was observed on the 25th of December under the name of Natalis Solis Invicti (Birthday of Sol the Invincible). It was a day of universal rejoicings, illustrated by illuminations and public games. All public business was suspended, declarations of war and criminal executions were postponed, friends made presents to one another and the slaves were indulged with great liberties". A few weeks before the winter solstice the Calabrian shepherds used to come to Rome to play pipes.

In the third century Herodian writing tells us that the Latins kept sacred the Festival of the Saturnalia in December to commemorate the hidden God just before the feast of the New Year in honour of Janus whose image had two faces, because in him was the end of the old and the beginning of the new year,...the festival lasting for seven days beginning from the 17th of December. The time was one of universal goodwill calling up thoughts of the golden age past and to

come. * * little images * * were made and distributed as presents among the children.

Well has it been said by Saint Chrysostom, who flourished about 390 A.D., that the "birthday of Christ was lately fixed at Rome on the 25th of December in order that whilst the heathen were busy with their profane ceremonies, the Christians might perform their holy rites undisturbed". Dr. Hooykaus remarks, the Church was always anxious to meet the heathen half-way by allowing them to retain the feasts they were accustomed to, only giving them a Christian dress or attaching a new Christian signification to them.

In the same manner the ancient German Yule feast which was annually celebrated for centuries before Jesus at the time of the winter solstice in honour of the Sun-God was afterwards connected with the Christmas festival. At this feast agreements were renewed, the gods were consulted as to the future, sacrifices were made to them and the time was spent in jovial hospitality. Many features of this festival such as burning the Yule-log on Christmas Eve still survive. At first they used to burn a log, but now they burn candles. Christmas-tree was the German Yule-tree. Another name for Christmastide is Yule-tide. In French it is called Noel which is the Hebrew or Chaldee word Nule.

Among the ancient Scandinavians the greatest festival was at the winter solstice. They called the night upon which it was observed 'Mother Night' and the feast was named 'Jul'—the origin of the word 'Yule'. It was celebrated in honour of Freyr (the son of Odin and the goddess Frigga) who was born on that day. Feasting, night carouses and demonstrations of a most dissolute joy were permitted on this occasion. And the principal guests received valuable presents, such as horses, swords, battle axes, gold rings etc., at their departure at the end of this festival.

The ancient Druids celebrated this festival in Great Britain and Ireland with great fires lighted on the top of hills. They called it Nolagh or Noel or the day of regeneration. All these ancient customs are being observed in some form or other today among the civilized nations.

The evergreen and particularly the mistletoe which are used all over the Christian world at Christmas time betray the heathen origin of the Christmas. Tertullian the Church Father

(200 A.D.) wrote to his brethren affirming it to be 'rank idolatry' to deck their doors with garlands, flowers, according to the heathen custom. What have evergreens and garlands and Christmas-trees to do with Christ's birth ? These are the relics of the old Yule feast. The tree symbolizes the ideas of the pagan forefathers and their faith that the powers of the returning sun will reclothe the earth with green and hang new fruits on trees. Foliage, such as laurel myrtle, ivy and all evergreens were Dionysiac plants, symbols of regenerative power, signifying perpetuity of youth and vigour.

Gibbon says in his history: "The Roman Christians ignorant of the real date of Christ's birth fixed the solemn festival to the 25th of December, the Brumalia or winter solstice, when the pagans annually celebrated the birth of Sol".

Although there is no historical record of the exact time, year, month, day and place regarding the birth of the Saviour Christ, although the events connected with the early life of Jesus are not based upon historical facts, still the ideal life and the exemplary character as depicted by the writers of the four Gospels show that the Son of Man was no other than the Son of God, nay, the Incarnation of the Supreme Deity who is the God of the universe and the Lord of all nations.

That meek and gentle and self-sacrificing Son of Man who preached in Galilee nearly two thousand years ago and who led his disciples along the path of righteousness toward the abode of infinite goodness and perfection was the Incarnation of the same Almighty Divinity who manifested Himself in Persia as Zoroaster, in India as Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna and other Divine Incarnations, who flourished both before and after the Christian era. From his childhood Jesus the Christ lived in Godconsciousness and realized the most intimate relation which the individual soul bears to the Father of the universe.

And through every action of his earthly career the Saviour Christ manifested Divine powers and exemplified the Truth that he was the embodiment of purity, unselfishness and righteousness, and the personification of the Divinity on earth.

The students of Vedanta do not care whether the personality of Jesus was historial or not, whether he was born of a Virgin at Bethlehem or not, whether he was the fulfilment of the old prophecy, or of the promise of Yahveh, the tribal

God of the house of Israel, or of the Messianic hope of the Jewish people, but the students of Vedanta recognize in the sublime character of the Saviour Christ the manifestation of the universal Logos or the Word of God as they do in other Incarnations of the same almighty Being.

Jesus lived the same simple life, always trusting in the Divine Will without thinking of the morrow, as was done by Buddha and other vedantic seers of Truth of ancient India.

That wonderful Redeemer whose life and teachings have transformed the character of thousands, and have brought spiritual light to millions and millions of people, preached the same law of righteousness and Divine love as were inculcated in India by Buddha and other *Avataras.*

By his unique self-renunciation and self-sacrifice and disinterested love for humanity, Jesus the Christ has conquered the hearts of the spiritually minded people among all nations, has taught them how to live the life of blessedness, how to reach perfection and Godconsciousness, how to work for others, how to live and die for the good of humanity, and for that reason, Vedanta accepts the Spiritual Christ's ideal, presents him before the seekers of spirituality and tells them to follow his path and to worship him as the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind and the Redeemer of the world.

In whichsoever heart the Christ ideal is accepted there is sown the seed of charity, self-denial, control of passions, renunciation, universal love, faith in God, which were the cardinal virtues of the religion of Christ, and there in the fulness of time will surely grow the tree of spirituality, bearing the fruit of the realization of the true meaning of "I and my Father are one," the oneness of the individual soul with the universal Spirit. It is in that temple of the human soul that the birth of the Spiritual Christ should be celebrated in peace and silence. When the cave of the human heart will be illumined with the divine light and the glory of the new-born Spiritual Christ, then will the spiritual self of the devotee enjoy the blessings of the spiritual Christmas and commune with the Son of God and realize the essence of the Trinity by entering into the state of superconsciousness.

CHAPTER VIII

VEDANTA AND THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Wherever there is a decline of religion or a rise of irreligion, the Lord manifests Himself in a human form. The Divine Being thus incarnates in flesh from age to age, wherever such incarnations are needed. These manifestations of the Divinity on earth are called in Sanskrit *Avatara,* which means incarnation of God, or 'descendant of God in a human form'. Such descendants of God have appeared among many nations in the past, and will appear among the nations of the future, for God loves all nations, every individual, whether man, woman or child, equally, irrespective of his or her caste, creed or nationality. His light, like the light of the sun, shines equally on the head of every living creature on this earth, and no particular tribe or nation can claim any special favour from God who is infinite in love, infinite in wisdom, and omnipresent. His unbounded love and His unlimited justice can never be restrained by anything in the universe. He manifests wherever and whenever such manifestations are needed, sometimes, perhaps, in India, sometimes in Persia, in Arabia, or in Palestine, or in some other part of the world. And no one can tell where such manifestations again may appear.

But the object of these Incarnations of God is the same everywhere. They come to help mankind, to show to him the path of righteousness, to show how to live the God-like life; how to realize that Divinity which dwells in each individual soul, and that to follow that Divine Will in every action should be the aim of human life.

These Divine Incarnations teach us how to conquer selfishness and the evils that proceed from living a life of selfishness; how to be free from that attachment to the lower self, to the things that are transient, and, above all, how to enter into the domain of blessedness, purity and love, which is everlasting and eternal.

Such Incarnations of God are born with a knowledge of higher spiritual laws and truths. From childhood their eyes

are open to the real nature of things. From the very first they recognize this oneness of the individual soul with the Universal Spirit. Before they receive instruction from outside, they realize that their real nature is Truth—is one with the universal spirit of the Father in Heaven. They know that the Eternal current of Divine Will is incessantly flowing through the river of their lives, and that their physical forms are merely instruments, guided, directed and moved by the All-knowing power of that Divine Will. They know that the utterances of their own mouths are expressions of that divine Will. In short, they are the embodiments of purity and righteousness; they are personifications of the Divinity on earth; they are those sons of God who have realized and who cannot forget their Divine Nature.

Such Incarnations become the Saviours of the world. How? By showing the path to perfection. The exemplary lives of such Incarnations are inspirations to the masses. Such is the nature of the Incarnations which have appeared in India and in other places. They are worshipped in the East as Rama or Buddha or Krishna, and in the West as Christ. For, we find the same Incarnation of Divinity in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, that meek, gentle and self-sacrificing Son of Man who preached in Galilee the same truth, the same spirituality that was taught and shown in India and in other places long before his birth. He lived the simple saintly life of the vedantic sage, trusting always in divine Will, without thinking of the morrow. This wonderful Redeemer, Jesus the Christ, whose life and teachings have transformed the character and brought spiritual light to millions and millions of human beings, was at first surrounded by a handful of disciples, whom he taught how to live the life of blessedness; how to live and work for others and how to die for others; and, above all, how to be conscious of that spiritual oneness, which is the aim and end of all religions. In and through his life he taught charity, self-denial, control of passions, renunciation, universal love, faith in God and the realization that the individual soul is one with the Universal Spirit. These are the principal points of his teachings.

About charity, he said to his disciples: Be kind to all; be kind to the poor especially; give freely; give to the poor whatever they need. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'.

'With what measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you again' etc. About self-denial, he said: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself'. 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it'. 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' He showed in his life how to control passions by practising austerities, by fasting for forty days, and by other ascetic methods. He said to his disciples: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' 'Love thine enemies and do good to them that hate thee'. He said: 'Have intense faith in God.' About unity, he said: 'I and my Father are one'. 'I am in the Father and the Father in me.' 'I am in you and you are in me'. 'The God of heaven is within you'.

If, on the other hand, we read the sayings of other Incarnations of God, such as Rama or Krishna, who flourished in India long before the birth of Jesus, we find the same teachings. In the life of Buddha, who lived about 500 years before the time of Jesus, we find the same practices of charity, self-denial, control of passions, universal love for all, etc. In India, as it has been said, it is commonly believed that all these great Incarnations of God have come and do come to re-establish forgotten truths, to point out the same truths that were discovered ages before their birth. They bring new life to the old truths; they show how we can live up to those ideals.

If we read the teachings of the vedantic sages who existed in prehistoric times, we find these spiritual and ethical laws summed up in three simple words: "Once upon a time a disciple went up to a great *Rishi,* or seer of Truth, and asked him what he should do to become righteous. The *Rishi* answered in three words: *damayata, datta, dayaddham.* The first word, *damayata,* means 'subdue thyself, control thy passions, conquer the senses, pride, egotism and selfishness'. The second word, *'datta',* signifies 'give freely, and be liberal to the poor and the needy, and be charitable to your neighbour and to all'. The third word is *'dayaddham',* and means 'be kind to all. Have pity and compassion for all. Love all as you love yourself'.

Thus we find in the oldest teachings expressions of the highest ethical laws, of charity, self-control and universal love. And we know that these spiritual and ethical laws repeatedly have been taught and popularized by the great sages, holy

men, Prophets and the Incarnations of God, who do not come to teach anything new, but to give new life to the old sayings—to the old laws that already existed, and which are eternal. Truth is always truth, whether it is discovered today or was known thousands of years ago. We should understand that these Incarnations did not learn these laws by reading books. They learned from the Divinity within themselves; they went to the fountainhead of wisdom. If an Incarnation of God were to come here today, he would teach the same truths which were taught by Jesus, by Buddha, or by any other Incarnation of the past.

A disciple went to his master, a great sage who lived in India not very long ago, and asked him this question: "When Jesus was on the Cross, how could he pray for his enemies, inspite of all his sufferings and agony of death? How could he do that?" The master replied: "If you drive a nail through a green cocoanut, I mean through the shell of a green cocoanut, you will touch the kernel too, and will make a hole in the kernel. In a green cocoanut, you know, the kernel is attached to the shell, and by driving a nail through the shell, you drive it through the kernel too. But in a dry cocoanut the kernel becomes separated from the shell, and if you drive a nail through the shell, the kernel is not pierced." "So", he said, "the ordinary men of the world are like green cocoanuts, but Jesus was like a dry cocoanut. When they pierced his body, which was the mere shell, he was not disturbed. That did not affect his soul. His inner soul was separate from his body, although living within the body; and that is the reason why he could pray for his enemies".

Whosoever is able to free himself from the attachment of the shell or body, can do the same. Vedanta points out the universal law which underlies all the actions of incarnate God.

If an Incarnation of God does this thing, others will have the same power when they have atained to the same state. If Jesus cured diseases and transformed the character by a single touch, every one will do the same when he shall have attained to the same spiritual realization. Otherwise how can we account for the miracles which have been accomplished in those countries where Jesus is not accepted as the Saviour?

Another teaching of Jesus recently have been discovered

by some Oriental scholars: "Raise the stone: there thou shalt find me. Cleave the wood: there am I". Many have tried to explain it in different ways. It has produced a great discussion among scholars. But Vedanta says the same thing. When a great sage, or a prophet, or an Incarnation of God. uses the words 'I' and 'my', he does not use it in the same sense that we do. 'I' and 'my', with him, do not signify physical form ; the terms mean spirit, the real nature. Vedanta says: 'I am in the sun: I am in the moon: I am in the stars: I am everywhere'. He cannot mean his physical form, he means omnipresent spirit. Krishna says: 'I am the original: from me proceeds everything, all the universe'. And knowing this, wise men worship him with love. He also says: 'Give up all the formalities of religion. Come unto me. Take thy refuge in me, and I shall make you free from the senses, the coarse nature'.

How can he mean the physical form ? How could he refer to the lower self which commonly is understood by 'I', or 'my', or 'mine' ? He indicates the divine Self, that higher spirit which dwells in the human soul, and which is immortal ; which is perfect, sinless, which is one with God. If we remember this, we cannot mistake the teachings of the masters ; we can understand easily and clearly.

You will notice in the philosophy of Vedanta that it does not say that we are born sinners ; that we are sinful. On the contrary, it teaches that each individual is a child of Divinity. We are children of Immortal Bliss. We cannot be sinners. By 'sin', Vedanta means selfishness which proceeds from ignorance of our real nature. When we forget that we are divine we become selfish. When we think that we are separate from universal Spirit, from the universe, from you and from every body, then we become self-centred. All the teachings and commandments of God which we find in different Scriptures: 'Do not do this', or 'Do this or that', are summed up in two simple sentences: 'Do not be selfish. Be unselfish'. That selfishness vanishes when the divine wisdom comes. The Divine wisdom is like a fire which burns everything into ashes. "As birds and deers do not approach a burning mountain, so sin cannot come near to the soul which has realized its true nature ; which comprehends that it is one with the Universal Spirit". Consequently, there is escape from sin.

Jesus said: 'Ask, and it shall be given unto you'. But he did not say: 'I shall ask for you and you will get it'. 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'. He did not say, 'I shall knock for you and it shall be opened unto you'. He said: 'Seek, and ye shall find'. So we shall have to ask, we shall have to knock, we shall have to seek. And how can we do that? Vedanta teaches that we shall have to do it in this way: Follow the teachings of those persons who are spiritual, who are strictly moral, who live a righteous life. Follow their example in your everyday life. Try constantly to carry out your idea through your action. Control the passions, subjugate the senses, deny yourself. Endure pain and sorrow without dejection or lamentation and have faith in the teachings of the masters. Meditate on your higher nature, which is spiritual, which is divine, which is immortal. Do not pray for this thing or that thing. Some say: 'Give me this', or 'Give me that'. They are like beggars. You should not think of your lower self when you pray. Send a current of good thought of love, towards all living creatures.

When the effect of these efforts is established, then comes renunciation through love, which Jesus taught: 'Sell all thou hast, give to the poor, come and follow me', he said, and, according to Vedanta, that kind of renunciation is a high form of love. When a person realizes that he is a spirit, that he is divine, that he is immortal, he can give up anything he possesses, because he finds that he does not individually possess anything. He says: "Whatever is mine is Thine: Whatever is Thine is mine". Such persons are ready to give up their bodies even, if by sacrificing their bodies they can do good to the world, because they are not attached so strongly to their bodies as we are. If we have a little headache, we become miserable; if a little disappointment, we weep and wail. But he who has realized his own real nature, which is divine, which is immortal, which is free from disease and sorrow, is never miserable. If this body is pierced through and through, he laughs, and blesses the evil doer. Such instances are to be found in every country where these Incarnations are manifested.

Ethically and spiritually the teachings of Jesus are in complete harmony with those of Vedanta, and the steps towards the attainment of spirituality are identical, but Jesus spoke

in parables, while Vedanta affords a rational foundation for ethics and religion. Vedanta invites all those who want explanation ; who desire to understand why we should be moral ; why we should be virtuous and lead a spiritual life ; Vedanta invites these and tries to help them.

CHAPTER IX

DID CHRIST TEACH A NEW RELIGION

The religion of Jesus the Christ was not like the orthodox Christianity of today; neither did it resemble the faith of the Jewish nation. His religion was a great departure from Judaism in principles and ideals as well as in the means of attaining them. It was much simpler in form and more sublime in nature. The religion that Christ taught had neither dogma, creed, system, nor theology. It was a religion without priests, without ceremonials, without rituals, or even strict observances of the Jewish laws.

As, in India, Buddha rebelled against the ceremonials, rituals, and priestcraft of the Brahmans and introduced a simpler form of worship and a religion of the heart, so among the Jews, nearly five hundred years after Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth rebelled against the priestcraft of Judaism. Jesus saw the insufficiency of the Jewish ethics and ideals and the corruption and the hypocrisy of the priests. He wished to reform the religion of his country and establish a simpler and purer form of worship of the Supreme Being, which should rest entirely upon the feelings of the heart, not upon the letter of the law.

The God of Jesus was not the cruel and revengeful tribal deity of the house of Israel; He was the Universal Spirit. He was not like the tyrannical master of modern orthodoxy, who kills, *damns,* or saves mankind according to his whim; He was a loving Father. Jesus' worship consisted not in ceremonials, but in direct communion between his soul and the Father, without any priestly intermediary. The idea of God as the 'Father in Heaven' did not, however, originate with Jesus the Christ, as modern Christians generally believe; it existed in the religious atmosphere of northern Palestine as a result of the Hellenic influence of the worship of Jupiter—Greek, *Zeus-pitar;* Sanskrit, *Dayus-pitar,* which means Father in Heaven, and hence the Father of the universe. The worship of Jupiter was introduced into Babylon and northern Palestine by Antio-

chus Epiphanes between 175 and 163 B.C. Although the orthodox Jews revolted against this innovation, yet there were many liberal-minded Jews among the Pharisees who liked the idea, accepted it, and preached it. One of the most prominent of the Jewish priests, who was considered by many as the true master and predecessor of Jesus and who was held in great esteem by the Pharisaic sect of the Jews, inculcated this belief in the merciful and fatherly character of God. His name was Rabbi Hillel. The Talmud speaks of this Babylonish teacher in glowing terms, declaring that he was next to the Prophet Ezra. It was Hillel who first preached this Golden Rule among the Jews. He used to spend much time in meditation and study, and recommended such practices to his disciples. Hillel died when Jesus was about ten years old.

Thus we see the idea of the Fatherhood of God existed in northern Palestine at the time of Jesus, and was preached in public by Rabbi Hillel. Moreover, at the same time Philo and other Neo-Platonist Jews in Alexandria were teaching the fatherly character of God and the only-Begotten Sonship of the Logos, or Word. Both the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of the Word were known to the Greeks and other Aryan nations, especially the Hindus of ancient India. Jesus of Nazareth took up this grand Aryan idea and emphasized it more strongly than any of his predecessors in Palestine.

At the time when Jesus appeared in Galilee, the religious atmosphere of the place was permeated with Persian doctrines, Hellenic ideas, Pythagorean thoughts, and the precepts of the Essenes, Therapeutæ, Gymonosophists, and the Buddhists of India. Galilee was then aglow with the fire of religious enthusiasm, kindled by the ardour of social and political dissensions. The Jews were already divided into three principal sects, the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. Each of these was trying to gain supremacy and power over the others. The Sadducees were the conservative and aristocratic class, while the Pharisees and the Essenes were essentially liberal. It was a time of great disturbance and intrigues, insurrections, rebellions, and wars. Such a period naturally kindles the fire of patriotism in the heart of a nation and forces its members to become active in every possible way. The misfortunes and calamities that befell the descendants of Israel made them remember the pro-

mises of Jahveh which were handed down to them through the writings of the prophets, and forced them to seek supernatural aid in the fulfilment of those promises. The unconquerable pride of the sons of Israel—that they were the 'chosen people' of Jahveh, the only true God, who was their governor and director—stimulated their minds with the hope that, through the supernatural power of Jahveh, the kingdom of their great ancestors would be restored: that a member of David's house would appear as the Messiah (the Anointed), sit on the throne, and unite the twelve tribes of Israel under his sceptre, and govern them in peace and prosperity. This was the first conception of a Messiah that ever arose in the minds of the Jews. It was the principal theme of the poets and Prophets who lived during the Babylonian Exile. The glory of the house of Israel and the earthly prosperity of the sons of Jahveh were the highest ideals of the Jews. They did not mean by 'Messiah' a spiritual Saviour of the world. The Christian idea of this term owes its origin to the Zoroastrian conception of the coming Messiah Soshiyanta. who, according to the promise of Ahura-Mazda, would appear on the day of judgement, destroy the evil influence of Ahriman, and renovate the world. This idea was accepted by the Pharisees, while the orthodox Jews repudiated it.

Although the mind of Jesus, according to the Synoptic Gospels, was not free from the superstitious beliefs of the Jews and the national traditions of his time; although he accepted the Zoroastrian conception of a 'coming Messiah' and that the end of the world was imminent, as well as the Persian ideas (which did not exist in Judaism before the Babylonian Captivity) of the renovation of the world, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, the punishment of the wicked, and the salvation of the righteous; although Jesus believed with the Pharisees in the Persian conception of heaven and hell and the devil, and saw many angels ascending and descending over his head—yet he realized that the Kingdom of God was a spiritual kingdom: that it was within himself; he felt the presence of the Father within him, and asked his disciples to feel likewise. The Jews understood by the Kingdom of Jahveh the Kingdom of this world and the prosperity of the house of Israel. But Jesus spiritualized that

ideal and taught a reign of righteousness and justice; not a reign of strife between nations, but a kingdom of peace and love. Jesus preached this idea among his people in the same way that Buddha declared that he came to establish a kingdom of peace and love and righteousness upon earth. Buddha did not use the expression 'Kingdom of God', but preferably 'Kingdom of justice, peace, and love'. Jesus had to use the former expression, because it was dominant in the minds of the people about him.

These ideas regarding a kingdom of peace and love were scattered in northern Palestine for at least two centuries before the Christian era by the Buddhist missionaries. It is indeed a well-known historic fact that the gospel of peace, good-will and love was preached in Syria and Palestine by Buddhist monks nearly two hundred years before Christ. Their influence was felt most deeply by the Jewish sect called the Essene, or the Therapeutæ, to which sect, as many scholars believe, Jesus himself belonged. It is interesting to note the similarities between the Essenes and the followers of Buddha. The Buddhists were also called Theraputta, a Pali form of the Sanskrit Sthiraputra, meaning the son of Sthira, or Thera: one who is serene, enlightened, and undisturbed by the world. Thera was one of Buddha's names. These people had the power to heal disease.

Readers of the history of India are aware that in 249 B.C. Asoka the Great, the Buddhist Emperor, made Buddhism the state religion of India and sent missionaries to all parts of the world, then known to him, to preach the gospel of Buddha. He sent missionaries from Siberia to Ceylon, and from China to Egypt. These missionaries preached the doctrines of Buddhism, not by bloodshed and sword, but by scattering blessings, goodwill and peace where they went. The edicts or stone inscriptions of Asoka were written during his lifetime. One of these edicts mentions five Greek kings who were Asoka's contemporaries,—Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemaos of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedon, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epiros. The edict says that Asoka made treaties with these kings and sent Buddhist missionaries to their kingdoms to preach the gospel of Buddha. "Both here and in foreign countries" says Asoka, "everywhere the people follow the doctrine of the Beloved of the gods, wheresoever it reacheth". Mahaffy, the Christian

historian says: "The Buddhist missionaries preached in Syria two centuries before the teaching of Christ, (which has so much in common with the teaching of Buddha), and this was heard in northern Palestine".

The labours of these Buddhist monks were not fruitless in these places. They continued to preach through parables the highest ideals of religion from generation to generation. Their communities, bound to a life of celibacy, which was not a Jewish custom, increased from age to age as outsiders joined their ranks. Even the Alexandrian Neo-Platonist Philo, who was a contemporary of Christ, mentions in his writings once or twice the Indian Gymnosophists or the Buddhists, and says that the Essenes numbered about four thousand at that time. The doctrines of the Essenes, their manner of living, and the vows of their communities show the results of the Buddhist missionary work during the two centuries immediately preceding the birth of Christ. Pliny says: "The Essenes live on the western shore of the Dead Sea. They are a hermit clan—one marvellous beyond all others in the world, without any women, without the joys of domestic life, without money, and the associates of the palm-trees". If we read Josephus we find how highly the Essenes of those days were respected.

One of the peculiar practices of the Essenes was the 'Bath of Purification', which was also a peculiarity of the Buddhist monks. The life led by John the Baptist was typical of that of a Buddhist monk. Exactly like a Buddhist, the Essene rose before sunrise and made his morning prayers with his face turned towards the east. When the day broke, he went to work. Agriculture, cattle-breeding, bee-keeping, and other peaceful trades were among his ordinary occupations. He remained at work until eleven o'clock; then he took a bath, put on white linen, and ate plain vegetable food. The Essenes abstained from meat and wine. They also wore leather aprons, as did some of the Buddhist monks. The Essene novice took solemn oath to honour God, to be just toward his fellow-men, to injure no one either of his own accord or by order of others, not to associate with the unrighteous, to assist the righteous, to be ever faithful to all, always to love truth, to keep his hands from theft and his soul from unholy gain. There were some who joined the order after having lived a married life.

Earnst Renan says: "The Essenes resembled the *Gurus* (spitirual masters) of Brahmanism". "In fact", he asks, "might there not in this be a remote influence of the Mounis[1] (holy saints of India)" ? According to Renan: "Babylon had become for sometime a true focus of Buddhism. Boudasp (Bodhisattva, another name of Buddha) was reputed as a wise Chaldean and the founder of Sabaism, which means, as its etymology indicates, Baptism". He also says: "We may believe, at all events that many of the eternal practices of John, of the Essenes, and of the Jewish spiritual teachers of the time were derived from influences then existing, but recently received from the far East" —meaning India. Thus we can understand that there was an indirect influence of the Buddhist monks upon the mind of Jesus through the Essenes, and especially through John the Baptist.

Although Jesus never pretended to have created the world, nor to govern it, yet his followers worshipped and loved him as the Messiah ; and later on the writer of the Fourth Gospel identified him with the 'word', or Logos of Philo, about the latter part of the third century of the Christian era. According to the Synoptic Gospels, the idea of the advent of the end of the world and of the reign of justice and the Kingdom of God grew so strong in the mind of Jesus that apparently it forced him to think that he—the Son and the bosom friend of his Father—must be the executor of God's decrees and that through him such a Kingdom of Justice and Goodness should be established. This thought gradually led him to believe that, as he was the Son of God, he should be the Universal Reformer, and was born to establish the Kingdom of God.

The fundamental principles of the religion of Jesus, however, were purity, charity, self-denial, control of passions, renunciation, non-attachment to wealth and to earthly things, intense faith, forgiveness and love for enemies, and the realization of the unity of the soul with the 'Father in Heaven'. During the one year of his public life as a spiritual teacher, Jesus taught his disciples these principles and showed them the way to practise them by his living example. But all these grand ethical and spiriual doctrines, upon which the religion of

[1] *Munis* (in Indian term).

Jesus was founded, were practised for nearly three centuries before Christ by the Buddhist preachers in Babylon and Syria, and they were taught in India for ages before that. The same ideas were inculcated by the vedic sages, by the Vedanta philosophers, and afterwards by the *Avataras,* or Incarnations of God, like Rama, Krishna (who lived about 1400 B.C.), Buddha (547 B.C.), Sankara, Chaitanya, and Nanaka, and also by Ramakrishna of the nineteenth century. If we study the lives of these men, we find that, like Jesus, each one of them lived a pure, spotless and unselfish life of renunciation, always loving humanity and doing good to all.

Those who have read the doctrines of Buddha know that the ethical teachings of Jesus seem like repetitions of what Buddha taught. Those who have read the *Bhagavad Gita,* or 'the Song Celestial', will remember that the fundamental principles of Krishna's teachings were purity of heart, self-denial, control of passions, renunciation, love towards enemies, forgiveness, and the realization of the unity of the soul with the Father. In short, the religion of Christ was taught before him by Buddha and Krishna in India. Like Jesus the Christ, Krishna said in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "I am the path. Follow me and worship one God. I existed before the world was created. I am the Lord of all". And again: "Giving up the formalities of religion, come unto me; follow me; take refuge in me. I shall free thee from sins and give eternal peace unto thee. Grieve not".

But although Jesus the Christ did not teach a new religion, still he came to fulfil and not to destroy. He gave a new life to the old truths, and by his wonderful personality impressed them upon the minds of his own people.

CHAPTER X

MOHAMMED AND HIS TEACHINGS

Nearly six hundred years after the advent of the glorious Son of Man, the Divine powers of the Lord were again manifested in the world through the great Prophet of Arabia, the founder of Islam.

He was born in Mecca, the capital of Arabia in the sixth century A.D. Arabia is a peninsula about 400 miles long, washed by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez on the west, the Indian Ocean on the south, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman on the east, and bounded on the north by a portion of Syria. It is a country covered by a vast sandy desert excepting the sea coasts, where green valleys with high mountains and scanty vegetation were at first inhabited by nomadic Arab tribes. Very little of Arabia was known to the civilized world before the time of Mohammed. The Arabs themselves knew of nothing beyond their own desert. These tribes claimed their descent from the family of Abraham, lived in small villages along the coasts, roamed over the peninsula from place to place upon camels, carrying on a caravan trade among different tribes and speaking the same language; but each tribe enjoyed independence under a crude patriarchal government by its chief. The Arabs were impetuous, restless, lawless, and warlike in their nature.

Pliny says: "The Arabian tribes are equally addicted to theft and to merchandise: the caravans that traverse the desert are ransomed or pillaged; and their neighbours, since the remote time of Job and Sesostries, have been the victims of their rapacious spirit. A single robber, or a few associates, are branded with their genuine name, but the exploits of a numerous band assume the character of lawful and honourable war. The temper of a people, thus armed against mankind, was doubly inflamed by the domestic license of rapine, murder and revenge. Each Arab, with impunity and renown, might point his javelin against the life of his countryman. The Arabs were

addicted to drinking, adultery and gambling. They had neither social nor religious restrictions to marriage or divorce."

A man used to marry an orphan for her money and leave or ill-treat her as soon as he had secured it. A divorced woman was not allowed to remarry, as it was considered a slur upon her husband. Revengeful women would not remain satisfied until blood was shed. Slaves were treated as beasts of burden. Human sacrifices prevailed in the temples, parents dragged their own sons to the alter and buried the female children to propitiate their blood-thirsty-idols.

Well has it been said by Gibbon, the historian: "In this primitive and abject state, which ill deserves the name of society, the human brute, without arts or laws, almost without sense or language, is poorly distinguished from the rest of the animal creation".

They had no religion higher than gross idolatry of which the chief seat was Kaaba in Mecca or ancient Macoraba, the capital of Macoraba. The Greeks gave the name Macoraba. The ancient legend of the Arabs tells us that this Kaaba was the most sacred temple in the country for it was originally built by Abraham. The story runs thus: Hager, Abraham's wife, wandering through the desert with her little boy in arms, reached at length the valley of Mecca. She, being extremely thirsty left her son Ishmail crying on the ground and began to search to and fro for water. Ishmail kicked around him, in childish passion, and lo ! beneath his feet the spot bubbled forth into a stream of clear sweet water. This was the famous well Zam-Zam. Amelkites and Arab tribes from Yemen attracted by this fountain settled by there. Ishmail grew up among them and married the daughter of their chief. On a subsequent visit the patriarch Abraham, assisted by his son Ishmail, erected the temple where it now stands and established the ancient rites of pilgrimage.

The direct descendants of Ishmail were known as Korish and they were at first the guardians of this temple and of the well. Cossai, a Korish chief, became the priest of Kaaba in the fifth century A.D., held the key of the temple and gave food and drink from the sacred well to the pilgrims who gathered there every year. The pilgrims used to visit the Kaaba to kiss the mysterious stone embedded in the eastern corner and to

make seven circuits round the sacred temple. There were many idols in the Kaaba, the chief of which was Hobal (Hebal). Each tribe had its own idol in the Kaaba, numbering about 360, some were shaped like human beings, others like angels, lions and so on. They were called by different names such as Rahel, Al-Lat, Al-Uzza.

Thus the religion of Mecca at the time of Mohammed's birth was a mixture of idol-worship, stone-worship, and Sabaism or the worship of heavenly bodies. The people were extremely superstitious. They recognized Abraham as the friend of God, whose name in Arabic was Alla-Tala, the most high God, to whom gods and idols were subordinate.

The worship of Kaaba satisfied the Arab minds, for it was founded upon the patriarchal traditions common at once to Christianity and Judaism. About this time both the Jews and the Arabs were expecting a great prophet among their people. Under such conditions the messenger of Lord Alla-Tala appeared in Mecca to establish true religion and destroy the gross idolatry and superstitions of the Arab tribes.

The Prophet of Arabia was descended from the family of Cossai, the priest of Kaaba and the chief of the Korish tribe of Mecca. His father's name was Abdulla or the servant of God and his mother's name Amina. At the age of 25 Abdulla married Amina, and after staying with her for three days left his wife and went on a mercantile expedition to Gaza in the south of Syria: on his return he suddenly died at Medina bequeathing to his widow five camels, a flock of goats and a slave girl. This little property and the house where Abdulla dwelt were the inheritance which the prophet of Arabia received at his birth.

On the 20th of August, in the year 570 A.D. Amina gave birth to a child who was named Mohammed by his grandfather Ab-dul Mutalib. The meaning of the Arabic word 'Mohammed' is 'The Praised.' According to the Arabic custom, a child of better class was never nursed by its mother. So the infant Mohammed at his birth was made over to the nurse Theuba, the slave girl of his uncle. But after a few days another nurse, Halima of the Beni-Sad tribe, took charge of the orphan child and nursed him until he was five years old. During this period Mohammed had several attacks of ecstatic

trances which created alarm in the mind of the nurse, but otherwise he was healthy and robust; and learned to speak the purest Arabic of Beni-Sad tribe. After some years Mohammed never forgot the kindness of Halima, his nurse; I am the most perfect Arab among you; my descent is from the Korish and my tongue is the tongue of Beni-Sad".

Mohammed spent the sixth year of his life with his mother at Mecca. Then he accompanied her to Medina to see some of her relatives. He stayed with his mother for a month in the house where his father died, saw his grave and then started for Mecca, but on the way his mother fell sick and died and he returned with his nurse to Mecca. This visit left an indelible impression upon the memory of Mohammed. The early loss of his mother made him feel lonely and sorrowful. His young mind began to meditate upon the transitoriness of earthly relation; and as he matured this meditative nature became stronger.

His grand-father Abdul Mutalib took charge of him and treated him with unusual fondness until 578 A.D., when he died. The loss of his loving grand-father was a great shock to the young heart of Mohammed, who was then only eight years old. However, the dying grand-father consigned the guardianship of his orphan grand-child to his son Abu-Talib, who faithfully discharged his duty as long as he lived. Abu Talib's fondness for Mohammed equalled that of his father and he treated his nephew as his own child. He kept Mohammed under his constant supervision and took him wherever he went. When Mohammed reached his twelfth year Abu-Talib started a mercantile expedition to Syria. But the young Mohammed would not be left behind, he must accompany his uncle and so they went together. On this journey they went through several Jewish settlements and came in contact with the Christians of Syria. This gave a great opportunity to Mohammed to learn the manners, customs, ceremonies and religious beliefs of the Jews and the Christians. His keen intellect, governed by a high spiritual tendency, grasped even at this early age, the minute theological differences that exist between the faiths of the Jews and the Christians.

Nothing of importance is mentioned in the life of Mohammed until he was twenty years old. At this time he

took part in a battle which was fought by his uncles against the rival chiefs of other tribes. Mohammed however did not fight, but gathered the arrows of the enemy as they fell and handed them over to his uncles. On one occasion, in his youth, he took up the occupation of a shepherd and as he watched the flocks in a lonely desert he often felt the presence of the Divine power around him and frequently went into ecstatic trances which were natural to him, and thus communed with the Supreme. The historians unanimously declare that in modesty of deportment, purity of manners and in moral virtues, the youth Mohammed was unrivalled among all the inhabitants of Mecca. It was on account of his pure character that his fellow citizens respected and honoured him and gave him the tittle of Al-Amin, the faithful. Thus honoured, Mohammed lived a quiet life in the family of his uncle Abu-Talib, until he was obliged to earn his own livelihood, for Abu-Talib had a large family and but moderate means.

Mohammed was never covetous of wealth nor did he care for the bustle and anxiety of a merchant life. But forced by pecuniary circumstances and requested by Abu-Talib himself, he accompanied the caravan of a wealthy Arab lady Khadiza, of the Korish tribe, and started for Syria.

The reflective mind of Mohammed, who was now 25 years old, found another opportunity to imbibe the tenets and beliefs of the Syrian Christians. He observed the rites and ceremonies of the worship of Mary and Jesus on the Cross. After disposing of the merchandise any buying things which Khadiza the wealthy widow needed, Mohammed returned with the caravan to Mecca. Historians describe the characteristic features of Mohammed in the prime of youth in the following manner: "Slightly above the middle size, his figure though spare, was handsome and the chest broad and open; the bones and framework large; and the joints well-knit together. His neck was long and finely moulded. His head, unusually large, gave space for a broad and noble brow. The hair thick, jet black, and slightly curling, fell down over his ear. The eyebrows were arched and joined, the countenance thin but ruddy. His large eyes, intensely black and piercing received additional lustre from eyelashes long and dark, the nose was high and slightly aquiline, but fine and at the end attenuated. The teeth were

far apart. A long bushy beard, reaching to the breast, added manliness and presence. His expression was pensive and contemplative. The face beamed with intelligence. The skin was clear and soft. His broad back leaned slightly forward as he walked and his step was hasty, yet sharp and decided like that of one rapidly descending a declivity. There was something unsettled in his blood-shot eyes which refused to rest upon its object. He was the subject of strong passions; when much excited the vein between his eyebrows would mantle and violently swell accross his ample forehead, yet he was cautious and circumspect, and in action kept ever aloof from danger. He was generous and considerate towards his friends. His commanding mien inspired the stranger with an undefined and indescribable awe; but on closer intimacy apprehension and fear gave place to confidence and love.

He was resolute and taciturn. His singleness of purpose, strength and fixedness of will and a sublime determination made his people bow before him with awe and reverence. Perceiving the noble and commanding qualities of Mohammed, Khadiza was so charmed and fascinated by the wonderful personality of Mohammed that she desired to marry him and through her sister at once proposed to him. Mohammed agreed and their matrimonial relation was established. This union was a very fortunate and a happy one and within the next ten or twelve years Khadiza bore to Mohammed two sons and four daughters.

It was Khadiza who first recognized the prophetic qualities in the character of her husband and surrendered to him her whole heart, soul and faith.

From this time on Mohammed was taken care of by his wife Khadiza and was thus enabled to live a quiet life spending most of his time in retirement and meditation. When he was about thirtyfive years old, an unexpected event occurred in his life which created some influence in the prophetic character of our hero. A violent flood swept down the valley of the neighbouring hills around the city of Mecca, and shattered the walls of the holy temple of Kaaba. The Korish priests fearing the utter destruction of the temple wanted to rebuild the walls and put a roof over the holy spot, which was so long without any cover, to prevent the thieves from taking away the

precious relics. But the treasury was low and there was no one to meet the expenses. Suddenly the anxiety of the priests was removed by the news that a Grecian ship was driven ashore by storm on the Red Sea near Mecca. The Korish chiefs, hearing the news, went to the shore, purchased the timber of the broken ship, and engaged her captain, a skilful Greek architect, Becum by name, to help in the reconstruction of Kaaba. The foundation and walls were built, but a serious discussion arose regarding the spot where the sacred black-stone should be placed in the wall. On account of the difference of opinion the building was suspended for four or five days. The contention among the Korish priests became hot and was about to end in bloodshed, when an old Arab citizen declared "O Korish, hearken unto me, my advice is that the man who chanceth first to enter the court of the Kaaba by the yonder gate, he shall be chosen either to decide the difference amongst us or himself place the stone." The priests and citizens agreed to this proposal with acclamation and waited for the result. It happened that Mohammed was the first man to enter the gate. Seeing him they all exclaimed, here comes Al-Amin, the faithful; we are content to abide by his decision. Receiving the commission, calm and self-possessed, he tried to conciliate them all by taking off his mantle and spreading it on the ground, placing the stone thereon and asking the chiefs to raise the four corners of the mantle. As they lifted the stone from the ground by holding the corners of the garment, Mohammed directed them with his own hand to the spot where it should be placed, and there it has stood for the succeeding centuries. The reflective mind of Mohammed at once realized that Providence has singled him out to be the judge among his people in such a sacred matter. He felt for the people of Mecca, whose immorality and debasement became almost unbearable to him.

Mohammed's heart was longing for Divine revelation and he wanted to know the true religion of God. So he retired to the solitary valleys and caves of mount Hira, about three miles north of Mecca. There he would live in a cave for days at a time, sometimes alone, sometimes with his wife Khadiza. This mountain range is stony and barren and has not one single green spot on it. The scenery was dry and dreary under the tropical sun, consequently there was no external attraction for

our hero, but his whole soul was now absorbed in spiritual visions which naturally appeared to him. Sometimes he would remain motionless in ecstasy, sometimes he would burst forth in wild rhapsodical language. Sometimes he would repeat in beautiful Arabic poems with such sentiments: "Verily, the man is in the way of ruin excepting such as possesses faith." Sometimes he would pray for guidance to the Supreme Being, who alone, as he believed, could help him. Sometimes standing alone on the mountain top amid the stillness of death which reigned in the desert, he would repeat: "Praise be to God, the Lord of all creations ; the most merciful, the most compassionate Ruler of the day of reckoning. Thee do we worship and invoke for help. Lead us in the straight path". No doubt such prayer rising from the sincere and earnest soul of Mohammed reached the throne of the Almighty.

In this manner he passed many years, now struggling for spiritual light, now receiving glimpses of the Higher Truth, now overtaken by darkness and doubt, again comforted by spiritual visions. Carlyle writes of Mohammed at this stage of life thus: A silent great soul ; he was one of those who cannot but be in earnest ; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. While others walk in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man could not screen himself in formulas ; he was alone with his own soul and the reality of things. The great Mystery of Existence, as I said, glared upon him, with its terrors, with its splendours ; no hearsays could hide that unspeakable fact, "Here am I." Such sincerity, as we named it, has in very truth something of the Divine. The word of such a man is a voice direct from Nature's own heart. Men do and must listen to that as to nothing else ; all else is wind in comparison. From of old thousand thoughts, in his pilgrimings and wanderings, had been in this man. "What am I! What is this unfathomable Thing I live in, which man name universe ? What is life ; What is death ? What am I to believe ? What am I to do ?" The grim rocks of mount Hira, of mount Sinai, the stern sandy solitudes answered not. The great Heaven rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing stars, answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul, and what of God's inspiration dwelt there had to answer !

At last, at the age of forty, he received divine inspiration,

and realized that he was the Prophet of his people. At this time Mohammed began to repeat verses which came to him as revelations and which were afterwards embodied in the Koran; in beautiful Arabic full of spiritual fire and wisdom, he would repeat them before his wife and friends and relatives. They would listen with attention and realizing that such beautiful verses coming from one who was utterly illiterate, who did not know how to read and write they would admire the wonderful power that was playing through Mohammed. His first admirers were Khadiza, his wife and his two adopted sons Zeid and Ally and his bosom-friend Abu-Bekr. He felt a tremendous influence that was overwhelming his whole being, but at times he was not sure whether it was from God or some evil spirits. During these moments of doubt Khadiza was his comfort and consolation. She would comfort him and confirm his faith in the Lord.

At last Gabriel, the messenger of God, appeared before him and approaching within two bow's length, brought from the most High the memorable Sura 96 which begins: "Recite in the name of thy Lord, who that created all things, who hath created man of congealed blood. Recite by thy most beneficial Lord, who taught the use of pen; who teacheth man that which he knoweth not assuredly. Verily, man becometh insolent, because he seeth himself abound in riches. Verily unto thy Lord shall be the return of all. What thinkest thou as to him who forbideth our servent, when he prayeth? What thinkest thou; if he follow the right direction; or command piety? What thinkest thou; if he accuses the Divine revelations of falsehood, and turn his back? Doeth he not know that God seeth? Assuredly. Verily, if he forbear not, we will drag him by the forelock, the lying, sinful forelock. And let him call his council to his assistance; we also will call the infernal guards to cast him into Hell. Assuredly, obey him not; but continue to adore God; and draw high unto Him".

Thus receiving the Divine Commission from the Lord, Mohammed spoke literally in the name of Lord. For this reason every Sura in the Koran begins with 'Say' or 'Recite.' Now he became Prophet and vicegerent of the Almighty. But the people of Mecca did not recognize the Divine Commission. He was scorned, abused and called names. The people would

treat him as one insane, as a sorcerer, as one possessed by evil spirits and so on. Mohammed grieved, and dispirited, wearied and perplexed, stretched himself on a carpet covering his body with his garment and went into the trance of ecstasy. Again the angel appeared to him and commanded him to preach saying: "Oh thou that are covered, arise and speak and magnify thy Lord". Thus we see that Mohammed was not only an inspired Prophet but was commissioned by the Lord to preach and summon his people to his religion. These visions are described to be as real as the morning dawn. From this time on revelations began to follow one after another until the last moment of his earthly career.

Mohammed's faith in the Lord became unbounded. He would not take one single step in his actions until he had received a direct command from the Above. When the command came the countenance of the Prophet used to be troubled and he would fall on the ground senseless or go into a trance. Oftentimes the inspriation would come unexpectedly without giving any previous warning to him. Mohammed himself said when asked: "Inspiration cometh in one of two ways; sometimes Gabriel communicateth the revelation to me as one man to another; this is easy, and other times, it is like the ringing of the bell penetrating my heart and rending me; and this is which afflicteth me the most." It was on account of these violent inspirations that the hair of the prophet prematurely turned grey. All these revelations are termed the Koran or Word of God, the literal meaning of the word being 'what is read or recited'.

At the age of 44 Mohammed became firmly convinced that he was the Prophet of God and all doubt vanished from his mind. Now Mohammed began to preach against Idol-worship and that "There is but one God and Mohammed his Prophet." Disregarding the scorn and abuse of his relatives and of the people he went on preaching the Truth and succeeded in adding to the small group of his admirers: viz. his wife, his two adopted sons and Abu-Bekr, his friend. There were 40 converts during the first four years; after three years of private preaching and solicitation the Prophet made an open call to the Korish at large. But the Korish objected to this call because they were worshippers of the Idol of Kaaba. They thought that their

forefather's religion, the worship of Kaaba, the glory of Mecca as the centre of pilgrimage from all Arabia was in great danger. So the Korish were determined to crush the new religion of the Prophet and force the followers to abandon it. Now terrible persecution began, hostility was excited and acts of violence commenced. One of the followers of Mohammed retired with a group of believers to a valley near Mecca for prayer and meditation. On the way they met strong opposition from the unbelievers, ending in fight, and then it was that the first blood was shed in Islam by the Prophet's follower Sad, who struck a man with a camel's goad.

As time went on, the followers of Mohammed began to increase in numbers and the jealousy and enmity of Korish were extremely aggravated by the success of the new sect. Mohammed himself being protected by his powerful uncle Abu-Talib remained safe and uninjured, but his followers were terribly persecuted. Mohammed then commanded his followers to go to Abyssinia; and in the 7th month of the 5th year of Mohammed's mission, eleven of his followers with their wives sailed in flight to Abyssinia. This is termed the first Hegira. The Korish pursued them in vain.

One of his followers then spoke to the Christian King of Abyssinia regarding what Mohammed had done for them. "O King" said he, "We were an ignorant people, we worshipped images, ate dead bodies, were lewd, ill-treated our neighbours, and the strong despoiled the weak of their properties. We were long been in this condition when God sent a Prophet to us from amongst our own people, whose noble birth, truthfulness, honesty and righteousness were well-known to us. He called us to God, to worship Him and Him only, and to leave off adoring the idols and stones before which our fathers and forefathers knelt. He ordered us to obey God alone and not to make anyone His equal. He made it incumbent on us to offer prayers, to give alms, to fast when not sick or travelling. He commanded us to speak the truth, to give back safe and whole what is entrusted to us by others, to be affectionate to our relations and kind to our neighbours, to shun wicked acts, licentiousness and bloody quarrels. He told us not to deprive orphans of their properties, not to impute bad motives or be suspicious of women. We have taken his advice and admonitions to heart,

have believed in his truthfulness, have followed all the orders which God has made known to us, and have believed in the unity of God. We abstain from what is forbidden, and confine ourselves to what is permitted.

"Our people are infuriated at this change in our belief, thoughts and actions. They have persecuted us, and done their best to force us back to the idols, images and wicked acts which we have left. When it became impossible to live among them, and when persecution and torture became unbearable, we left our country, and believing you to be a tolerant King have taken refuge in your dominions."

In the meantime the revelations continued, and Gabriel appeared to Mohammed giving him all instructions regarding the doctrine of Islam such as the pictures of heaven and hell ; of the paradise, the celestial enjoyments for the believers, and eternal hell fire for the unbelievers, the resurrection of the body etc.

Now the dispensation of Mohammed was called Islam (surrender of the soul to God) and his followers were named Mussalmans, that is, those who surrender themselves, and unbelievers were termed Kafir. At the age of 50, Mohammed lost his beloved wife Khadiza. So long the prophet was devoted to one wife although poligamy was the prevailing custom of the Arabs and a month after this Abu-Talib the uncle and gaurdian of the Prophet passed away. He was the prop of his childhood, the guardian of his youth and a tower of defence in his maturity. Now Mohammed was heart-broken. He had lost his best friend and the guardian. From this time on the persecution of the Korish was directed towards the Prophet himself.

At the age of 52, Mohammed, in a vision, being guided by Gabriel, his soul soared to the seventh heaven and appeared in the direct presence of the Almighty, who instructed him to pray five times in the day, instead of three. The Korish now plotted against the life of Mohammed ; and so he fled to Medina in June 622 A.D. arriving there on the 8th day (June 28th) at the age of 53. All of his disciples and followers, numbering about 100 deserted their homes in Mecca and went to Medina with the Prophet. This is the 2nd Hegira.

In Medina, he bought a place and within 7 months after his arrival built his first mosque or place for worship. It was called the mosque of Friday (Musjid-al-Juma). Friday became

the Sabbath for public worship, because Mohammed held his first service at Medina on Friday. Mohammed spent the rest of his life in Medina and many revelations came at this time.

In 630 A.D., the Prophet entered into Mecca commanding 10,000 followers armed in battle array; took possession of the Kaaba, destroyed the idols and triumphantly established the banner of Islam in the heart of Mecca. After the conquest of Mecca, Mohammed said: "O Lord, I have delivered my message and discharged my ministry." Then he returned to Medina where he passed out at the age of 63 in the year 632 A.D. after suffering for two weeks from a severe attack of fever.

No Prophet had ever suffered so much persecution nor had shown so much firmness of faith and trust in the will of his Lord throughout his life and under all circumstances as was shown by the Prophet of Arabia. His teachings were simple but full of fire which suited the warlike temper of the Arab nation. Mohammed by his teachings changed the character of the lawless Arab tribes, gave them laws, made them law-abiding. and from disintegrated and warring factions, created a nation. No Prophet could have done anything with these wild fanatical people of the desert of Arabia.

Mohammed preached the unity of God and unity of his Prophet, whosoever believes this doctrine receives everlasting life and celestial happiness. Regarding the glorious work of Mohammed, Carlyle writes. "To the Arab nation it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world; A Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe; see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great; within one century afterwards, Arabia is at Grenada on this hand, at Delhi on that; glancing in valour and splendour and the light of genius, Arabia shines through long ages over a great section of the world. Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, as soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Mohammed and that one century,—is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black, unnoticeable sand, but lo the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada".

CHAPTER XI

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS TEACHINGS

Many centuries before the Christian era, Bhagavan Sri Krishna said: *"Whenever religion declines and irreligion prevails, I manifest myself in a human form to establish righteousness and to destroy evil".*

This divine promise has been fulfilled not only in India but also in other parts of the world. If we study carefully the religious history of the world, we find that after Sri Krishna, there arose many shining stars in spiritual life, who have been regarded as spiritual giants, Prophets, teachers and Saviours. Among those great ones we may mention a few who came one after another in course of time. You are all familiar with the name of Gautama Buddha, the great founder of Buddhism which converted many of the civilized nations of the pre-Christian era, and whose followers now exceed those of other religions. About 2,600 years ago, Gautama Buddha lived and taught the highest ideals of humanity. He was the son of a Hindu Raja. He left his throne, his beautiful wife and child as well as all the comforts and luxuries of a princely life, when out of his palace with a begging bowl in his hand and suffered all kinds of hardships and austerities, performing penances for many long years until he attained to Buddhahood. Buddha wanted to find a remedy for the sorrows, miseries, diseases and death from which human beings were suffering, and having discovered that remedy he gave it out freely among the masses, so that everyone might get a glimpse of that joy and happiness which comes through Nirvana, the beautific state of Supreme Consciousness.

About the time when Buddha was delivering his message in India, there arose in Persia the great founder of Zoroastrianism, Zarathustra, the Prophet of the Parsee religion. He was the chosen prophet of Ahura Mazda, the great God whom the Parsees worshipped with love and reverence. About the same time there appeared in China, Lao-tze, the great philosopher and the founder of Taoism. Taoism is a great religion which has influenced the spiritual life of the Chinese people, and

Lao-tze is regarded by the followers of Taoism as the Saviour of the Chinese.

Nearly six hundred years after Buddha, there arose in Nazareth, Jesus the Christ, who delivered his message among the Jewish people. His religion has since converted thousands and thousands of the followers of other religions in Europe and in western parts of Asia. Jesus of Nazareth is regarded in Christendom as the Saviour of mankind. About six hundred years after Jesus the Christ, there came Mohammed the Prophet of Arabia. He was the founder of Islam. Mohammed is regarded by his followers not as an Incarnation of Divinity like Christ, but as a Prophet, a messenger, the last of all the Prophets, who came to deliver the Divine message. Then again, a little later we find in India, there appeared Sankaracharya, the great philosopher and founder of Advaita philosophy, the non-dualistic or monistic system of Vedanta. After Sankaracharya, about 600 years later, there came other great teachers in succession like Ramanuja in Southern India, Chaitanya in Bengal, and Guru Nanak in the Punjab. Other Prophets also arose in other parts. After Chaitanya and Guru Nanak, there was a need for a spiritual master, because the religious ideals which were very strong in the days of Chaitanya and Guru Nanak, deteriorated in many ways on account of the inroads of the Western civilization, and materialistic and commercial ideals which were pouring into the heart of India from Europe, especially from England.

The students of the universities and colleges in India were receiving instructions on material lines, and their ideals became more and more soulless and worldly. They forgot the spiritual ideals of their motherland. They received Godless education in the universities; and constant attacks of the Christian Missionaries against Hindu ideals created a kind of unrest in the whole country. People were flocking into the churches, forsaking their own religion and receiving instructions in Christian ideals of thought. At that time there was a great need for a spiritual harmony among all religions. The different sects among the Hindus made votaries who became blind in their faith and attacked the followers of other religions and of other sects, condemned and criticized them. The Vaishnavas were condemning the Saktas and the Saivas, who in turn found

fault with the Vaishnavas; the Vaishnavas were denouncing the Buddhists; the Hindus were reproving the Christians, while the Christians were reprobating the Hindus. Following the footsteps of the Christian missionaries the Brahmo Samaj was attacking the orthodox Hinduism. At that time there was a terrible unrest everywhere. At this juncture, according to the promise of the Lord, 'whenever religion declines and irreligion prevails, I manifest myself in a human form to establish righteousness and to destroy evil', and in order to fulfil that promise, as it were, there arose in an obscure village of Bengal, a great spiritual giant who was afterwards known as Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

On Wednesday the 17th of February 1836 A.D. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was born at Kamarpukur in the district of Hooghly, Bengal. His parents were of humble means, but were extremely righteous and they belonged to the most noble and respectable family of the high caste Brahmins. His father Kshudirama Chattopadhyaya was very orthodox, prayerful and lived up to the high ideals of a spiritual life. He never spoke an untruth. Kshudirama was honoured and revered as a *Vaksiddha Purusha,* that is, whatever he uttered invariably came to be true. He never accepted any offering from unrighteous hands or from the low Sudras.

Sri Ramakrishna's mother was equally pious and full of devotion. She was like the embodiment of simplicity and kindness. Her mind was free from earthly desires, pride and egotism. Born of such pious parents in an obscure quarters of the world, Gadadhara (which was the former name of Sri Ramakrishna) spent his boyhood in the place of his birth. Many narratives of his early life have been handed down to us which prove that Gadadhara possessed supernatural powers even from his childhood. He had keen intellect and wonderful memory.

When Gadadhara was five years old his parents sent him to the old fashioned village primary school. There he learnt how to read and write, but he showed great aversion to Arithmetic when he was told to subtract one number from another. He learnt addition (*yoga*) very cheerfully, but he disliked subtraction (*viyoga*). Moreover, he did not care so much for studying books. He would rather make a resort in a solitary mango-grove, situated in the outskirts of the village, where he

would lead his playmates and would spend the whole day in playing the pastoral sports of Sri Krishna with merry songs and boyish mirth. Gadadhara had a sweet musical voice and he could imitate to perfection any melody after hearing it for the first time. Sometimes he would gather the peasant boys and girls around him, play and dance with them as Sri Krishna did in Brindavan, and lead them as their guiding spirit.

All of his boyish plays had a striking resemblance to the Pauranic descriptions of the pastoral sports of the *Brindavan Lila* of the great Incarnation Sri Krishna. Gadadhara had a charm in his speech and could chant a whole drama word for word after hearing it once. He could imitate the gestures and mannerisms of any actor in the local dramatic party or *Yatra.* Gadadhara was naturally endowed with talents for fine arts. Sometimes he would go alone in the woods and stay in a solitary place for hours under the shade of a big tree and made clay images of gods, goddesses and holy saints of Hindu mythology and gave them away to friends. At other times he would spend hours in drawing sketches of flowers, birds, animals and paint portraits with colours.

All these marvellous powers made Gadadhara the centre of attraction for the young and old inhabitants of surrounding villages. Thus gradually he became so popular that he would be invited to almost every house of high and low castes, and in spite of the unkind admonitions of his relatives he would readily accept invitations of all and visit them without thinking anything about their caste, creed and social position. There was something very fascinating in his personality. His fair complexion, smiling face, melodious voice and perfectly symmetrical figure with a soul adorned with disinterested love for all, hypnotized and bewildered, as it were, the minds of those who ever happened to come in touch with him even for a moment. When he was about six years old Gadadhara went one day into the ecstatic state of superconscious communion with *sat-chit-ananda,* the infinite source of pure existence, intelligence and bliss, at the sight of the most beautiful colouring of some passing clouds against which were flying in a row some snow-white wild cranes. This beautiful scene reminded him of the unearthly complexion of Sri Krishna's figure (body) adorned with exquisite garland of wild flowers of the garden

in Heaven. This experience was the first instance of Divine ecstasy or Godconsciousness which later in his life became constant companion of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. He always remembered this ecstatic vision and spoke of it to his disciples. This superconscious realization or the Divine communion of the soul with God which the Yogis struggled hard for ages to attain to, was like a gift of nature with Sri Ramakrishna. Sometimes Gadadhara would sit with the learned Pandits and scholars, philosophers and theologians, and listen to their debate with intense interest and make cogent remarks in an off-hand way, which were always sure to be conclusive and extremely effective to the minds of all hearers. Those appropriate remarks showed invariably how deep was the insight and how vast was the wisdom and intuition of this wonderful boy. In this way, Gadadhara spent his boyhood by winning the hearts of all.

When he was seven years old, his aged father passed away. This event made him pensive and impressed upon his mind the transitoriness of all earthly objects. He now began to frequent the cremation grounds near the mango-grove and sit there for hours absorbed in meditation. When the itinerant *Sadhus* would come to the village on their way to Jagannath, he would freely mix with them and dress like the *Sannyasins* who had renounced the world. Even at this tender age Gadadhara's mind was longing to become free from the fetters of *maya* or worldly attachment, and he frequently went into trance-like conditions of ecstasy when his body would become stiff and motionless. But his relatives thought that the young boy was under the influence of some evil spirits. Although Gadadhara was born and reared in a strictly orthodox family, his mind was free from all prejudices and he had no hatred against any of low castes. On the contrary, he thought that all men and women were the children of the almighty Lord and, consequently, were like his own brothers and sisters. Therefore, at the age of nine when he was invested with the sacred thread he did not hesitate to receive food offering (*bhiksha*) from a blacksmith's wife of a low Sudra caste, whom he regarded as his godmother. This created a great sensation among the people of his village, especially among his relatives who were furious at the thought that Gadadhara, being the son of a holy Brahmin who was highly respected by all, should

accept the offering of a low Sudra woman and should regard her as his godmother ! But Gadadhara did not mind their uncharitable remarks, and felt genuine delight for what he had done. Thus from his early boyhood Gadadhara showed that his mission was to establish harmony and unity among all classes of Hindu people and he never failed to express in words and deeds the divine love which was overflowing in his heart for the good of all.

When he was ten years old Gadadhara was persuaded to impersonate the Siva in a dramatic performance on *Sivaratri* night in the neighbourhood. Dressed up as a great Yogi when Gadadhara appeared before the audience, he stood motionless with tears in his eyes, as if he was possessed of the spirit of the great god Mahadeva. He lost all sense-consciousness and entered into a deep state of ecstatic super-consciousness. The audience fell at his feet, bowed with reverence and saw in him the veritable image of Siva. From this time onward, his ecstatic visions became more and more frequent. Whenever he would think of Sri Krishna his whole being would be filled with the divine spirit of the Lord of Brindavan. Sometimes he would sing religious songs and at other times he would think of himself as female, and feel within himself the presence of Radha, the Divine consort of Sri Krishna. Thus he spent his boyhood in Kamarpukur until he was seventeen years old and completely conquered the minds of all the inhabitants of all castes and creeds of adjacent villages. There was not a soul in the neighbourhood who did not realize the wonderful powers of this enchanter of human hearts and who did not love him as his dearest friend and nearest relative.

About this time Gadadhara's eldest brother Ramakumar opened a *Tol* to teach Logic, Theology, Sanskrit literature, Astronomy, Hindu law and philosophies. Ramakumar thought that Gadadhara was losing his valuable time and opportunity for receiving proper education in those branches of knowledge. He felt that it was a disgrace and shame to the family of a high-caste Brahmin to have a member ignorant and uneducated in those important branches of learning, and that in future he being unable to earn his livelihood would become a burden to the poor family. So after much consideration Ramakumar brought his younger brother, Gadadhara to Calcutta, kept him

under his care and persuaded him to study in his school. Gadadhara joined the school and began to study, but strange to say, that his youthful mind was neither attracted by secular studies nor was influenced in the least by the good counsels of his eldest brother. He began to think of the results which could be achieved by secular education and compared them with the highest ideal of his life. He said to himself that secular education was good for earning one's livelihood as well as for acquiring name, fame and earthly prosperity. But the acquisition of all these he did not care for. He wanted to have that kind of knowledge which would enable him to realize the unchangeable Truth of the universe and which would lead his soul to the attainment of spiritual perfection and freedom from all the fetters of the world. This thought grew so strong in his soul, which was aspiring for the *para vidya*, that it forced him to become indifferent to book-learning and theoretical training of the school. His soul yearned for some kind of education which would give him as a recompense neither wealth, nor name, nor fame but the realization of the Supreme Lord of the universe.

Seeing this sudden change in Gadadhara's mental attitude Ramakumar became extremely discouraged and disappointed. He then tried to get some kind of occupation which might be agreeable to the spiritual tendency and truth-seeking mind of Gadadhara and at last found for him the position of a family priest in some respectable families in the neighbourhood of his *Tol* at Jhamapukur in Calcutta. Gadadhara faithfully discharged his duties for nearly two years. In the meantime Ramakumar accepted the position of a high priest in the temple of Kali, the Divine Mother, at Dakshineswar about four miles north of Calcutta on the banks of the Ganges. This beautiful temple was built by Rani Rashmani, pious Hindu lady of the caste of fisherman, in a beautiful garden measuring about twenty acres of land at an enormous cost of nine lakhs of rupees. Within the compound there were a Vishnu temple, a temple dedicated to the Goddess Kali, and twelve Siva temples. It took nearly eight years to complete the construction of this magnificent structure. The Hindu temples are built not for public devotion like the Christian churches, or the Mohammedan mosques. On the contrary, they are erected mostly by wealthy persons

as a meritorious religious act. These temples are dedicated to the honour of some god or goddess of Hindu mythology or of an Incarnation of God with an image or statue or certain symbol of the deity upon the altar. Alms-houses are generally attached to these temples where hundreds of poor persons are daily fed with all kinds of cooked food. The duty of a priest is to show reverence to the Being whose image or symbol is kept upon the temple-altar and to offer everything to his memory just as a Hindu householder would offer the best things he possessed to the most respectable guest when he comes to his house. But the priest must feel the actual presence of the deity before he can be satisfied that his offerings are accepted and his prayers are heard.

Ramakumar was appointed to perform all such duties of a high priest as well as to conduct the inaugural ceremony of the temple which took place on May 21st, 1855 A.D. This opened the way for Gadadhara to accompany his eldest brother to assist him in the discharge of the duties of the high priest. The magnetic personality of young Gadadhara attracted the attention of Rani Rashmani and her son-in-law Mathur Babu, who noticed in him the expression of uncommon spiritual powers. They felt that if Gadadhara would take up the worship of the Divine Mother in the temple of Kali, Her Divine grace would soon be perceived by all and that his whole-hearted devotion would make the image of Kali the living goddess in the temple. With this kind of faith in his mind Mathur Babu approached Gadadhara, and urged him to take up the *puja* duty of the Divine Mother.

At first Sri Ramakrishna, who was a lover of freedom, disliked the idea of being tied down to the routine work of a priest ; but when he received the help of his nephew Hridayram, he became the priest in the temple of Radha Govinda, and Ramakumar continued his duties of the Kali temple. This arrangement lasted for about one year when Ramakumar suddenly passed away. Sri Ramakrishna was then obliged to do the works of Ramakumar although his heart was heavily laden with grief and sadness. He began to feel more keenly the transitoriness of earthly life, and the realization of the Mother of the universe as the highest ideal of human existence.

Ramakrishna performed the daily duties of a priest in the

Kali temple, repeated prayers to the Divine Mother, offered flowers, scent and cooked food of various kinds, burnt incense and waved light every morning and evening for a few months. But the earnest and truth-seeking soul of Sri Ramakrishna longed for something more and began to question within himself: "What is all this for ? Am I doing all these things before a dead statue of stone or does the actual Divine Mother, listen to my prayers and accept my offerings ?" This questioning of the mind was the turning-point in the life of this sincere young priest. It aroused the dormant spirit and forced him to take a new path, the followers of which is the transformation of the individual soul into a living God.

He would constantly pray to the Divine Mother and entreat Her to manifest and appear before him. Sometimes he would burst forth into tears and ask: "Oh Mother! Art Thou here ? Dost Thou listen to what I say ? How can I know where Thy abode is ? Thou dwellest everywhere, yet why can I not see Thee ? How can I realize Thy presence and behold Thy Divine form ? If Thou art the Mother of all, am I not Thy child too ? Why dost Thou not come to me and show me Thy real form ? I am illiterate, I do not know how to read the scriptures (*shastras*), teach me, Oh Mother! Thy Divine Wisdom." In this manner he would cry and pray. As the days went by, the fire of the search after Divine Mother began to burn within his soul with so much vigour that it could not be quenched by any other thing of this world. It swallowed up all other desires, all other thoughts and ideas. The rising and setting of the sun made no change in his soul. Day after day and night after night he had one current of thought. Neither the counsels of friends nor the advice of relatives could resist the tremendous onrush of that ever-flowing current. He did not care for food, clothes or any comfort of life. He lost his sleep and could no longer discharge the duties of a temple priest. He was obliged to resign.

The officers of the temple decided that Sri Ramakrishna had turned insane. They pitied him, sympathized with him, and prayed for him, but all was in vain. His relatives thought that perhaps he could be cured if they could make him marry. But it was extremely difficult to find a bride of proper age whose parents would be willing to give their daughter in marriage

to a Brahmin who had lost his prestige and social position by becoming a temple priest. Above all, how could responsible parents agree to marry their daughter to one who was known everywhere as insane ? At last, after searching for a long time, they found a very young girl whose parents did not object so much. But this girl, who was only five years old, was betrothed to Sri Ramakrishna, who was then twentythree years old. However, the betrothal ceremony made no impression upon his mind. He went on in his own line of thought as before, sometimes praying and crying, sometimes sitting alone in deep meditation under the big Banyan tree in the Panchavati, sometimes sitting on the lonely spot under the Bael tree at night.

There have been several world Teachers in the past, among whom Gautama Buddha, nearly twentyfive centuries ago performed the severest austerities, the most vivid descriptions of which have been handed down to us through ages. His path was suited to the time when he flourished and his discoveries of the grand truths in the spiritual realm have helped mankind in their struggle for the attainment of peace, happiness and emancipation from all bondages. As Buddha came to fulfil the spiritual needs of those people among whom he lived and moved, so did Christ and Sri Chaitanya gave to the world according to the spiritual demands of the time and place of their birth.

Similarly, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna came to give to the world something, which is greatly needed in the twentieth century. The great renunciation of Gautama Buddha was certainly unparalleled, but there is another phase of renunciation which was never performed by any *Avatara* or Great Teacher of the world. It is perhaps more difficult to accomplish than the external abandonment of wealth, wife and children. Even after practising for six long years all kinds of penance and asceticism, Buddha found that the thought of his wife and child still lingered in his mind. Sri Ramakrishna, however, conquered all attachment to wealth and woman, not by running away from them, but by living in their midst and yet rising above them.

Sri Ramakrishna conquered all attachment to wealth by practising a unique *Sadhana*. He would take some dust of earth in one hand and gold or silver coin in the other and

repeat: *taka mati*; *mati taka*—'gold is dust, dust is gold', and after realizing the sameness of both, he would throw them away into the Ganges. Since then, nothing of the world appeared valuable to him. It was an example of the conquest of matter by the power of the mind. From this time he could not bear the touch of any coin or metal of any kind. His fingers would grow stiff and body motionless if he unconsciously touched any metal; even when he was asleep, if his body was touched with gold or silver coin, the result would be similar. Thus he renounced wealth because an attachment to it is an obstacle in the path of Godconsciousness. In this age of materialism people's mind is so strongly attached to wealth that they have become money-making machines, and the general belief is that the acquisition of wealth is the highest ideal of earthly life. Most of the people now-a-days do not hesitate to commit any wrong for the sake of gaining wealth. Therefore, through this unique *samadhi* Sri Ramakrishna has become the perfect ideal of non-attachment to wealth.

Sri Ramakrishna conquered all lust and attachment to woman by realizing that every woman, young or old, is the earthly representative of the Divine Mother. He worshipped all women by seeing the Divine Mother in them. He did not run away from his wife but worshipped and realized her as the embodiment of the Divine Mother. Even when he was taken by Mathur Babu to the house of a public woman, Sri Ramakrishna said: "My Divine Mother appears before me in the form of an unchaste woman," and then and there he merged in *samadhi*, the divine trance. The woman after hearing this, prostrated at the holy feet of the Bhagavan. This kind of attitude towards women, is the sure and effective means of conquering attachment to lust and woman.

In the lives of previous Hindu *Avataras* as well as of great Siva we find that they all had wives and children. Sri Gauranga married twice but had no issue. There are examples of world Teachers like Sankaracharya, Christ and others, who lived a pure life and remained unmarried. None of them had set such a high example of absolute freedom from sex-idea as was done by Sri Ramakrishna, even while he was living in company with his wife, who was the Blessed Virgin all through her life.

In this age of lust and greed when men and women have

no control over sex-idea. when the ideal of strict *Brahmacharya* is almost forgotten, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and his wife Sarada Devi showed in their lives how spiritual marriage is possible purely on the soul-plane. Furthermore, Sri Ramakrishna exhibited deep reverence towards all women by accepting a woman as his *Guru,* who was a *Brahmacharini* of rare culture and qualifications and well-versed in Hindu scriptures. It was she who helped Sri Ramakrishna in various kinds of *Sadhana.* It was she who convinced all people that Sri Ramakrishna was neither mad nor insane, but that he had attained the highest state of communion with the Divine Mother of the universe. She noticed in him the signs of *Mahabhava,* highest ecstasy, which Sri Radha of Brindavan and Sri Gauranga of Nadia attained in their struggle for Divine communion.

This *Brahmacharini* stayed at Dakshineswar for several years and taught Sri Ramakrishna different practices in various branches of Yoga. Through each *sadhana* Sri Ramakrishna attained its goal within a very short period of time. Before this *Brahmachirini* came to Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna passed through various stages of *sadhana.* In the first stage he longed for a vision of the Divine Mother ; sometimes he would sit near Panchavati on the banks of the Ganges, cry bitterly for the vision of the Divine Mother, pray to Her like a child, lie down, roll himself and rub his face on the bare ground as if he was suffering from the agony of death until the longing of his soul became almost unbearable. One day Sri Ramakrishna went to the temple and like a mad man implored the Divine Mother again and again, to appear before him in Her real form and said: 'Oh Mother, if Thou art not gracious enough to show me Thy real form, I shall kill myself on this spot at this very moment'. Thus saying he quickly drew the heavy sword which was hanging on the wall within the temple. As he raised it up to his neck and was about to cut his head off, the sword dropped from his hand on the floor and at the same moment he fell unconscious with tears of joy streaming down his cheeks. The real form of the Divine Mother now appeared before him and after blessing him entered into the stone image of Kali in the temple. From this time Sri Ramakrishna used to see the vision of the Divine Mother and remain in ecstasy for hours together during day and night and acted like a mad man. But

no one could understand him. In another stage of his *sadhana* Sri Ramakrishna thought that the idea of caste-superiority in a Brahmin was a great hindrance to God-vision. Therefore, he would go to the house of a sweeper, who was an out-caste, and would stoop down to clean the door with his hands as well as with the hair of his head which was long and flowing. Thus he conquered all egotism and self-conceit. In another stage the thought came to him that as there were so many creeds and sects of different religions, each one of which prescribed certain methods for attaining to Godconsciousness, he would practise them all and would see for himself what results could be gained by following those methods. Thus thinking he took up one after another the various exercises given in Tantra and Vaishnava Shastra under the guidance of the Brahmin lady Brahmacharini. Every time there came some expert *Sadhaka* to give him proper instruction for reaching the goal. Each of those experts, however, was astonished to see him mastering within a few days the most difficult exercises which took them years to accomplish.

Sri Ramakrishna followed then the path of Advaita Vedanta under the direction of Tota Puri, the great Jnana-Yogi who came to Dakshineswar. Within three days he attained to *nirvikalpa samadhi* where all sense-consciousness vanished, all distinctions of duality disappeared and his soul transcending the sense of *I, me* and *mine* merged into the infinite ocean of *sat-chit-ananda* and enjoyed the bliss of *Nirvana.* Noticing this sudden transformation of Sri Ramakrishna, Totapuri declared: "What magic power (*daivi maya*) is playing through thee that thou hast accomplished in three days what took me forty years to achieve! How marvellous is all this!"

Sri Ramakrishna then took up the practices of the Mohammedan faith and did all that a devout Mohammedan would do for the realization of Allah, the God of Islam. Under the guidance and direction of a Mussalman Fakir, Govinda by name, Sri Ramakrishna would repeat the name of Allah, recite Namaz regularly, and would dress himself after the fashion of a Mohammedan. Within three days he realized Allah and in a vision saw the prophet of Islam. Sri Ramakrishna went beyond the boundary of orthodox Hinduism following the Christian and of Islamic methods of worship.

By practising all these various kinds of *Sadhana,* Sri Ramakrishna realized the ideals of all sectarian religions. He discovered that the goal of each of them was the one Infinite Being called by various names; that all sectarian religions were like so many paths which lead to the same God. Thus he verified the saying of Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever path, I reach him. All men are struggling in different paths which ultimately lead to Me". The various religions of the world are like rivers which rising from different sources run crooked or straight and fall into one ocean. Even so the sectarian religions among various nations rising from different standpoints run crooked or straight into one Infinite Ocean of *sat-chit-ananda.*

This grand Truth of the Sanatana Hindu religion was realized by Sri Ramakrishna in this age through *sadhana.* Having finished his *sadhana* he proclaimed his message and gave to the world the fruits of his own experience and realization. Pandits and scholars of every nationality as well as hundreds of devout men and women of all sects came to see him and listened to his original and wonderful teachings. Using the commonest occurrences of everyday life as illustrations, Sri Ramakrishna succeeded in making the dull minds of worldly people grasp the spiritual depth, beauty and grandeur of his sublime ideals.

Have we not watched with admiration when the followers of all the great religions of the world recognized in Sri Ramakrishna their divine ideals? Have we not seen how Quakers and orthodox Christians knelt and prayed before him and worshipped him as the Christ when Bhagavan went into superconscious communion with the Heavenly Father after hearing the holy name of Jesus of Nazareth. The Mohammedan saints who came to see him prostrated at his holy feet and recognized in him the highest ideals of Islam. The Buddhist regarded him as *Sambuddha,* the Enlightened. The followers of Chaitanya, like Vaishnavacharan and others worshipped him as the second prophet of Nadia when Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna occupied the altar which was reverentially dedicated to Sri Chaitanya by hundreds of devoted Vaishnavas, who always prostrated before that altar and prayed to their Lord Gauranga.

The worshippers of Sri Krishna saw in him the manifesta-

tion of the divine qualities of the Lord of Brindavan; the devotees of the Divine Mother of the universe saw that She was playing through him; the followers of Siva declared that Sri Ramakrishna was their living deity; while the Sikhs, the faithful votaries of Guru Nanaka, regarded him as their holy Master. His followers, seeing all these powers, marvelled at his greatness and believed that his many-sided personality was the living example and the consummation of all the previous *Avataras* and divine manifestations. And the Truth of this was again and again verified and confirmed by his acts as well as by his own words: "He who was Rama, Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, has now become Ramakrishna". Bhagavan was always conscious of this truth and spoke of it before the world as well as before his dearest disciples. As his Divine personality was many-sided yet one, so was his great mission. It was to show the underlying unity in the variety of religions and to establish that universal religion of which sectarian religions are each but partial expressions. Like all other Saviours, the life of the Bhagavan exemplifies his mission.

In this age of scientific rationalism, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna has shown to the world how the Lord of the universe can be realized and attained in this life, and no one except him has ventured to go through all the tests of sceptics and agnostics to prove that he had attained to Godconsciousness. Those who have seen him, lived for years with him, and watched him by day and by night, have proclaimed before the world that he was the embodiment of the highest spiritual ideals, given in all the Scriptures of the different nations of the world.

निरञ्जनं नित्यमनन्तरूपं,
भक्तानुकम्पाधृतविग्रहं वै।
ईशावतारं परमेशमीड्यं,
तं रामकृष्णं शिरसा नमामः ॥*

Salutations to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, the perfect embodiment of the Eternal Truth, which manifests Itself in various forms to help mankind, and the Incarnation of the Supreme Lord who is worshipped by all.

HARI OM TAT SAT.

* Composed by Swami Abhedananda.

MEMOIRS OF RAMAKRISHNA

FOREWORD

The *Memoirs of Ramakrishna* is a reprint with emendations and under a new title of the authorised American edition of the *Gospel of Ramakrishna,* first published in 1907 by the Vedanta Society in New York, of which Swami Abhedananda was the President. The *Gospel of Ramakrishna* was much appreciated in America and Europe. A Spanish edition also came out in 1915 from Buenos Aires in South America, and a Portuguese edition soon followed in Brazil. In Europe, the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* was translated in various languages like Danish, Scandinavian and Czechoslovak. This book also inspired the Austrian painter, Frank Dvorak, who afterwards made full-size portraits of both Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, which are now installed in the temple of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta.

The *Memoirs of Ramakrishna* can be said to be the modified *Ramakrishna-Kathamrita* in one volume with a new form and a new title, because Swami Abhedananda has practically translated in English all the volumes of the Bengali *Kathamrita* (volumes I to V) reproduced by "M" or Mahendra Nath Gupta (Master Mahashaya) and has avoided repeatations occured in the original (Bengali) *Kathamrita.* In fact, the *Memoirs of Ramakrishna* is an anthology or a collection of the universal teachings of Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, which, if followed, will lead to a perfect and peaceful life. Sri Ramakrishna was a God-intoxicated man. He realized the absolute Brahman which was the divine consummation of both the indeterminate and transcendent Brahman and the determinate immanent Brahman, i.e. the Brahman which assumes both the indeterminate (*nirguna*) and the determinate (*saguna*) aspects and at the same time transcends them both. Swami Abhedananda says that Sri Ramakrishna's mission is to proclaim the eternal and universal truth that though the Brahman is one and without the second (*ekam* and *advitiyam*), yet He assumes many aspects and that same stupendous One is worshipped by different nations under different names and forms. "The present upheaval of the spiritual tide, the waves of which, traversing nearly half of

the world, have touched the shores of America, was produced by the Christlike character and divine personality of Bhagavan Ramakrishna, revered and worshipped in India today as an ideal manifestation of the Divine glory".

Sri Ramakrishna realized the universal Truth and preached to the whole world his universal doctrine of *yata mata tata patha* i.e. 'as many faiths, so many practices'. Now, in the light of his universal doctrine of *yata mata tata patha,* we find that the *isms* like *dvaita, vishistadvaita* and *advaita* are regarded as the *alternative* faiths in relation to three kinds of spiritual *sadhana,* which lead to the sincere seekers after Truth to one and the same Godconsciousness. Sri Ramakrishna has not said to synthesise all the different *isms* (*vadas*) and spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) into one, but has instructed all to follow any one of the *alternative* spiritual *sadhanas* to reach the ultimate goal. It is also found from the marginal headings, made by Swami Abhedananda for the American edition of the *Memoirs* or *Gospel* that Sri Ramakrishna has dealt with the doctrines of *jnana, karma, yoga* and *bhakti,* and has said that these are the *alternative* religious or spiritual practices, and are not antagonistic to one another, but are suitable and helpful to different *Sadhakas* of different angles of vision and different faiths and tastes for reaching to one and the same destination or goal, which is the realization of the absolute Brahman.

Now from the phenomenal standpoint Sri Ramakrishna has shown sometimes some differences between *jnana* and *vijnana,* between *jnana* and *bhakti,* between the indeterminate (*nirguna*) Brahman and the determinate (*saguna*) Brahman, etc. As for example, when he has said about *jnana* and *vijnana,* he has mentioned about a distinction between *jnana* as an incomplete and general knowledge and *vijnana* as a complete and special or universal knowledge, which can be termed as the *vishesa-jnana* and the *samanya-jnana,* as defined by the Nyaya philosophy of India. While discussing about *jnana* and *vijnana,* Sri Ramakrishna has said that *jnana* leads to *vijnana* or *vishesa* (special) *jnana.* He has given an illustration of the roof of a house and the stairs (*chad* and *shiri*). He has said that when we climb or reach the roof of a house by the help of the stairs, we ordinarily say that the roof is higher than the stairs, but, in truth, the materials, out of which the roof

and the stairs are constructed, are the same brick dusts and lime (*surki* and *chun*). The staircase is here regarded as *jnana* and the roof of the house, as *vijnana,* and though the roof appears as higher than the levels of the stairs, yet the materials of the two are one and the same. Similarly *jnana* ordinarily appears to be lower than, or inferior to, *vijnana* (*vishesa-jnana*), but essentially they are one and the same knowledge or consciousness, as an individual soul (*jiva*) ordinarily appears different from the Brahman, but, in essence, is non-different from the Brahman. Sankara has explained in his different writings that when one makes *vichara* of the *mahavakyas,* he realizes first in an individual way: *aham brahmasmi* and then in an universal way: *sarvam khalvidam brahman* which has been compared in the *Isha Upanishad* as: *"ishavasyam idam sarvam yatkincha jagatyamjagat"*. Here the word 'then' means 'simultaneously' without a least difference of time. And it is also a rule or a common practice that in the way or process of Divine realization (though realization does not involve any process or disciplinary method, being self-revealing (*svayam-prakasha*) and self-shining (*svayam-jyoti*), individual consciousness (*vyasthi* and *vishesa-jnana*) like *aham brahmasmi* dawns first and then the universal one (*samasti* and *samanya-jnana*). From this it is evident that individual knowledge or consciousness is not different from universal knowledge or consciousness, as a spark of fire is not different from the pire of fire. Regarding *jnana* and *vijnana,* Sri Ramakrishna says: *"Jnana* is to know the *Atman* through the path of discrimination (*vichara*) like 'not this, not this' (*neti neti*). When this discrimination leads to *samadhi,* then the *Atman* can be apprehended. But *vijnana* is a complete knowledge or realization. Some heard of milk, some have seen it, but others have tasted it.' So with God. Those who have heard of Him, are still in ignorance; those who have seen Him, are the *Jnanis,* but those who have tasted or realized Him, are the *Vijnanis.* After seeing God when one makes acquantance with Him and realizes Him as the nearest and dearest of all, then that is *vijnana.* At first it is necessary to discriminate 'not this, not this' i.e. God is not the element of Nature, He is not the senses or the sense powers, He is not this mind, not this intellect, not this egoism, but is beyond all the categories of Nature. To go to the roof, one must climb

step by step, leaving one step after another. The staircase is the same as the roof. After reaching the roof, however, one can easily see that both the roof and the staircase are of the same material. The same infinite Brahman appears as the personal God, *jiva* and the twentyfour categories of Nature". Now, though this illustration of Sri Ramakrishna seems to be somewhat different from the former one, yet it gives a clear idea of non-difference of *jnana* and *vijnana*.

Sri Ramakrishna has admitted the existence of an eternal Energy which is known as Sakti or Kali, the Divine power of the absolute Brahman. He says that when right knowledge or Divine realization manifests, then it is known or felt that the eternal Energy or Sakti or Kali and the absolute Brahman (*shuddha Brahman*) are inseparable. If you admit the existence of fire, how can you deny its burning power (*dahika sakti*), which is inseparable or non-different from fire? So one cannot think of fire without thinking of its burning power. Similarly we cannot think of the rays of the sun without thinking of the sun itself. "Therefore no one can think of the Brahman as apart from Sakti. The eternal Energy is creating, preserving and destroying everything and that Energy is called Kali, the Divine Mother". Sri Ramakrishna has further said that Kali is the Brahman, the Brahman is Kali, Kali and the Brahman are one and the same. "I call Him the Brahman when He is absolutely inactive, that is, when He neither creates, nor preserves, nor destroys the phenomena; but when He performs all such actions, I call Him Kali, the eternal Energy and the Divine Mother. So the absolute Brahman and the Divine Mother are one and the same Being, the difference is in their names and forms (*nama-rupa*), just as the same substance water is called by different names in different languages like *jal, pani, aqua,* water, etc."

In fact, Sri Ramakrishna has not discarded any of the *isms* or doctrines, rather he has regarded them as different paths or ways to reach the same goal. He says: "The Advaita Vedantist discriminates by saying 'not this, not this' (*neti neti*), i.e. the absolute Brahman is not this, not that, not any finite object, not the individual soul and not the external world. When as the result of this kind of reasoning (*vichara*) the heart ceases to be moved by desires, when, in fact, the mind is merged

in the supreme state of superconsciousness, the absolute Brahman is reached or realized, which is one without the second (*ekamevadvitiyam*). One who has truly attained to the *Brahmajnana,* realizes that the Brahman, the Absolute, alone is real and the world is unreal and that all names and forms (*nama-rupa*) are like the unreal dreams. What the Brahman is, cannot be described by words of mouth, nor can one even say that He is personal. Such is the viewpoint of a non-dualist (Advaitavadi)". Here Sri Ramakrishna has represented the correct view of Advaita Vedanta for the *Jnanis.*

He has further explained the doctrine of the qualified non-dualism (*vishistadvaitavada*) for the Jnani-Bhaktas who consider the Brahman as sum total of *Isvara, jiva* and the phenomena (*jagat*). The Jnani-Bhaktas maintain, says Sri Ramakrishna, that the Brahman is not to be considered as apart from the world (*jagat*) and the individual soul (*jiva*), but *Isvara, jiva* and *jagat* these three come from one, three is one and one is three. "Let us take a bel-fruit. Let the shell, the seeds and the kernel be kept separate. Now suppose someone wished to know the weight of the fruit. Surely it would not be sufficient to weigh the kernel alone. The shell, the seeds and the kernel are all weighed with a view to get the real weight of the Bel fruit. No doubt, we reason at the outset that the all-important thing is the kernel and not either the shell or the seeds. In the next place, we go on reasoning that the shell and the seeds belong to the same substance to which the kernel belongs". Here Sri Sri Ramakrishna has truely represented the doctrine of *vishistadvaita,* as maintained and explained by Ramanuja and his followers. Because Sri Ramakrishna fully knows that all men are not of same taste and temperament, and so different faiths and spiritual practices are necessary for men of different tastes to reach the same goal.

Similarly Sri Ramakrishna has supported the faiths and doctrines of the Dvaitavadins, Saktivadins, Yogins and others. While explaning the doctrine of the dualistic devotees and the lovers of personal God, he says that the Dvaitavadins do not consider this external world as an unreal dream, but they say that this world is the glory of God. The individual souls are absolutely different from the all-merciful God, and they reach God through His mercy. In like manner, Sri Ramakrishna has

supported the disciplines and practices of the Yogis who seek to commune with the infinite Spirit, the *Paramatman*. He says: "His (Yogi's) object is to bring the finite human soul into communion with the infinite Spirit. He tries first to collect his mind which is scattered in the external world of senses and seeks to fix or concentrate it on the universal Spirit".

So Sri Ramakrishna believes that all religions and spiritual practices are true and all of them lead the sincere seekers after Truth to the abode of eternal peace and absolute freedom, and they differ only in their names and forms. Therefore he instructs all neither to combine them into one, nor to synthesize them into one system, but to consider them as the *alternative* paths or methods to realize the same absolute *Atman* which is not limited by any definite religion, creed, or practice. Sri Ramakrishna says: "But all these various ideals (preached and reached by various religious faiths and practices) are of one and the same Reality or Brahman, the difference being only in the names. It is the same Being whom men call by the name of the Absolute (Brahman), the universal Spirit, the impersonal God, or the personal God with divine attributes". Sri Ramakrishna's religion or philosophy, therefore, breathes a new trend of thought and a new spirit to bring a harmony among all nations of the world.

Now, in conclusion, it can be said that Swami Abhedananda has correctly depicted in this book the central idea and ideal of his beloved Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in a very lucid language and facinating style which go deep into the bottom of the heart of everyone and rouse the spiritual contents which, when realized, bring everlasting peace and tranquility even in this mundane life. The Swami has also added a short but eventful life of his Master in the beginning of this book as an Introduction.

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

This is the authorized English edition of the *Gospel of Ramakrishna*. For the first time in the history of the world's great Saviours, the exact words of the Master were recorded *verbatim* by one of his devoted disciples. These words were originally spoken in the Bengali language of India. They were taken down in the form of diary notes by a householder disciple, 'M'. At the request of Sri Ramakrishna's *Sannyasin* disciples, however, these notes were published in Calcutta during 1902-1903 A.D., in Bengali, in two volumes, entitled the *Ramakrishna Kathamrita*.

At that time 'M' wrote to me letters authorizing me to edit and publish the English translation of his notes, and sent me the manuscript in English which he himself translated, together wth a true copy of a personal letter[1] which Swami Vivekananda wrote to him.

(*True Copy*)

DEHRA DOON,
24th Nov., 1897.

My dear Master Mahasaya:

Many thanks for your second leaflet. It is indeed wonderful. The move is quite original, and never the life of a great teacher was brought before the public untarnished by the writer's mind as you are doing. The language also is beyond all praise. So fresh, so pointed, and withal so plain and easy.

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

(Sd.) VIVEKANANDA

[1] Swami Vivekananda's letter to 'M'.

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

(Sd.) V.

This letter of Swami Vivekananda shows that the words of the Master were accurately recorded by "M."

At the request of "M" I have edited and remodelled the larger portion of his English manuscript; while the remaining portions I have translated directly from the Bengali edition of his notes. The marginal headings, foot-notes and index, as well as the division of the 'Gospel' into fourteen chapters, were added by me. I have endeavoured to make every word of this edition as literal, simple, and colloquial as possible.

Some repetitions are purposely kept to show how the Master used the same illustrations on different occasions during the course of his eloquent conversations.

The completed work is now offered to the Western World with the sincere hope that the sublime teachings of Sri Ramakrishna may open the spiritual sight of seekers after Truth and bring peace and freedom to all souls struggling for realization.

NEW YORK,
December 15, 1907. SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

PREFACE TO THE INDIAN EDITION

Readers will notice that the present volume the *Memoirs of Ramakrishna* differs slightly in two places from the *Gospel of Ramakrishna,* published by the Vedanta Society of New York, U.S.A., in the year 1907. One of these occurs in the foot-note at page 411 of the American Edition of the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* where Subodh's (Swami Subodhananda's) name was included among those who received *sannyasa* initiation with *gerua* (ochre-coloured) cloth from the Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. But he was not present on that occasion although he had come in contact with the Master and received his blessings sometime in 1885. In this volume therefore his name has been omitted.

As regards Sarada (Swami Trigunatitananda) whose name appears in page 341[1] in the *Memoirs* I wish to remark that he also was not present on that memorable day. But he put on *gerua* cloth under the explicit instruction of Sri Ramakrishna and ran away from home to avoid marriage.

Furthermore, I may mention here that Gopal (junior) has been recognized as one of the *sannyasi* disciples of Sri Ramakrishna in Romain Rolland's book on the *The Life of Ramakrishna* (page 302) and other works in Bengali. On the contrary, he married and became a householder.

CALCUTTA,
April, 15, 1939. SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

[1] Of the first edition.

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INTRODUCTION

The Lord Krishna declares:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥

"Whenever true religion declines and irreligion prevails, I manifest myself and in every age I incarnate to establish spiritual law and to destroy evil"—*Bhagavat Gita.*

Saviours

India has produced many great spiritual leaders who are recognized and worshipped as Saviours of mankind. The life and character of each of these were as wonderful, superhuman, and divine as were those of the illustrious Son of Man. Each has been like the embodiment of all divine attributes; each has been the giver of new life to the old spiritual truths, and the generator of that tidal wave of spirituality which has again and again inundated the religious world, surmounting the barriers of superstition and prejudice and carrying the stream of individual souls towards the Ocean of Divinity.

The present upheaval of the spiritual tide, the waves of which, traversing nearly half the world, have touched the shores of America, was produced by the Christlike character and divine personality of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna—revered and worshipped in India today as an ideal manifestation of the Divine glory. His life was so extraordinary and unparallel that within ten years after his departure from earth it aroused the admiration, wonder and reverence not only of all classes of people in his own country, but of many distinguished European scholars of the nineteenth century.

Life of Sri Ramakrishna by European Scholars

A short account of the life of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna appeared for the first time in the January number of the *Imperial and Quarterly Review* of 1896 under the title of *A*

Modern Hindu Saint. It was an able article penned by Prof. C. H. Tawney, who was for many years the professor of Sanskrit in the Calcutta University and the distinguished Librarian of India House in London. This article excited the interest of many European scholars, among whom Professor Max Müller showed his appreciation by publishing in the August number of the *Nineteenth Century* of 1896 a short sketch of this Hindu saint's life entitled *A Real Mahatman.* In this celebrated article, which was for some time the subject of most severe criticism both in England and India among many of the Christian missionaries and the Theosophists, the noted Professor showed the difference between the imaginary Mahatmans of the Theosophists and the real Mahatman or the great soul of India who had reached Godconsciousness and had manifested Divinity in all the actions of his daily life. He gave a brief account of the extraordinary life of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, paying him the highest tribute of honour and respect that a Christian scholar could give to a divine manifestation in the so-called heathen land. Later, in 1898, he compiled and published *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings,* collecting more facts of his life and the sayings of this exemplary character perfumed with divine personality.

Ramakrishna a Real Mahatman

Professor Max Müller was deeply impressed by the originality of this great saint and real Mahatman, who was not brought up within the precincts of any university and who drew the water of his wisdom neither from any book nor Scripture nor from any ancient Prophet but directly from the eternal fountainhead of all knowledge and wisdom. He was also struck by the broad, liberal and absólutely unsectarian spirit which pervades the utterings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Indeed the life and sayings of the Bhagavan have given a death-blow to the sectarian bigotry and fanaticism of the so-called religious world. Whosoever has read his sayings is impressed with the universality of his spiritual ideals which embraced the ideals of all mankind.

From his childhood Sri Ramakrishna fought against all sectarian doctrines and dogmas, but yet at the same time he

showed that all sects and creeds were but the paths which lead sincere and earnest souls to the one universal goal of all religions. Having realized the highest ideal of every religion by following the methods and practices of the various sects and creeds of the world, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna gave to humanity whatever spiritual experience and realization he had acquired. Every idea which he gave was fresh from above and unadulterated by the product of human intellect, culture or scholastic education. Each step of his life from babyhood to the last moment was extraordinary. Every stage was like the unfoldment of a chapter of a new Scripture especially written out by the unseen hand to fit the minds of the East and the West and to fulfil the spiritual needs of the twentieth century.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna is not only the greatest saint of modern India but he is the *Real Mahatman*. A real Mahatman as described in the *Bhagavad Gita* (chapter VII, verse 19) is one who, having realized the Absolute, perceives the Divine Being in all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. His heart and soul never turn away from God. He lives in God-consciousness, and divine qualities constantly flow through his soul. He cares neither for fame nor power nor worldly prosperity. A true Mahatman has no attachment to his body or to sense-pleasures; he is a living God; he is absolutely free and his inner nature is illumined by the self-effulgent light of divine wisdom and his heart is overflowing with divine love. His soul becomes the playground of the Almighty, his body and mind become the instrument of the divine will. And Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was such a real Mahatman.

Even in this age when the vast majority of educated people do not believe in the existence of God and of the human soul, when scientific knowledge has turned the minds of students away from the path of spirituality, when sense-pleasures and luxuries of life have become the ideals of earthly existence and human beings have degenerated into money-making machines, we have witnessed with our eyes a great soul who is recognized as a real Mahatman by hundreds and thousands of thoughtful men and women of India, Europe and America. This great soul manifested his divine qualities and lived in Godconsciousness at every moment of his earthly career, and today thousands of people prostrate before his picture and worship him as the

latest manifestation of Divinity. Whosoever has heard of his most wonderful life has felt in his soul that Ramakrishna was the perfect ideal of mankind.

He made his appearance in the village of Kamarpukur, an obscure part of Bengal on Wednesday, the 17th February 1836 A.D. where he passed his early boyhood, but his youth and maturity were spent near Calcutta, the capital of British India, as cosmopolitan a city as London, New York, or any other large city of the civilized world and the seat of education, refinement and scientific knowledge. He allowed the sceptical minds of the students and professors of colleges and universities as well as of educated men and women of the world to come in direct touch with the self-effulgent light of Divine wisdom which was shining in its full glory through his childlike, soft, and tender form. Scholars and intelligent people of all classes poured from all quarters to that spot which was sanctified by the presence of the Bhagavan. He was the living example of spiritual greatness and Divinity which had been manifested by the great Incarnations like Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Rama, Chaitanya[1] and other Saviours of the world.

We know a number of sceptics and agnostics who had never believed in Christ or Buddha or Krishna as Divine Incarnations, who had never accepted the authority of the Scriptures, but on the contrary had maintained that the lives of Christ and of other Saviours were but exaggerated accounts based upon the imagination of their disciples, anxious to deify their human masters—such sceptics and unbelievers when they met Ramakrishna and watched his super-human life, were convinced that the lives of Christ, Buddha, Krishna, and other *Avataras* must have been true and real. The same sceptics when they beheld his divine powers, were so deeply impressed with his personality that they prostrated before him, kissed the dust of his holy feet and realized that he was the personification of the Sermon on the Mount, the Incarnation of Divinity on earth, and the re-manifestation of Christ, Buddha, Krishna, and Chaitanya in one form. All the special qualities and divine powers that had

[1] Chaitanya, the founder of a sect of the Vaishnavas, is regarded in India as the Incarnation of Krishna. He is also known as the "Prophet of Nuddea," for Nuddea (or Navadvipa) in Bengal was his birthplace. His other name is Lord Gauranga. He was born in 1485 A.D., and was a contemporary of Luther.

adorned the wonderful character of each of these great personages were witnessed by them in this uncommon Divine manifestation of the nineteenth century.

Ramakrishna As the Divine Ideal of All Sects

Have we not watched with admiration when the followers of all the great religions of the world recognized in Sri Ramakrishna their divine ideals? Have we not seen how Quakers and orthodox Christians knelt and prayed before him and worshipped him as the Christ when the Bhagavan went into superconscious communion with the heavenly Father after hearing the holy name of Jesus of Nazareth? The Mohammedan saints who came to see him prostrated at his holy feet and recognized in him the highest ideal of Islam. The Buddhists regarded him as *Sambuddha,* the Enlightened. The followers of Chaitanya, like Vaishnava Charana[2], and others, worshipped him as the second Prophet of Nadia when Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna occupied the altar which was reverentially dedicated to Sri Chaitanya by hundreds of devoted Vaishnavas, who always prostrated before that altar and prayed to their Lord Gauranga. The worshippers of Krishna called him the Incarnation of Krishna. The devotees of the Divine Mother realized that the Mother of the universe was playing through him; the followers of Siva declared that Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was their living deity; while the Sikhs, the faithful votaries of Guru Nanaka[3], regarded him as their holy Master. His followers, seeing all these powers, marvelled at his greatness and believed that his many-sided personality was the living example and the consummation of all the previous *Avataras* and divine manifestations. And the truth of this was again and again verified and confirmed by his acts as well as by his own words: "He who was Krishna, Rama, Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, has now become Ramakrishna". Bhagavan was always conscious of this truth

[2] Vaishnava Charana was a great Hindu saint and a true follower of Chaitanya, whom he worshipped as the ideal Incarnation of divine love.

[3] Guru Nanaka was the founder of the sect known as the Sikhs, or disciples. He was born near Lahore in the Punjab (India) in the year 1469 A.D. and died in 1538 A.D. He was the first of the ten *Gurus* or spiritual masters among the Sikh people. He is regarded by his followers as a manifestation of Divinity.

and spoke of it before the world as well as before his dearest disciples.

His Mission

As his Divine personality was many-sided yet one, so was his great mission. It was to show the underlying unity in the variety of religions and to establish that universal religion of which sectarian religions are each but partial expressions. Like all other Saviours the life of the Bhagavan exemplified his mission. He spent the best part of his life in practising in full the different methods of Yoga. He went through every minute detail of the devotional exercises and different forms of worship ordained by the scriptures of different nations and practised by the followers of the various sects and creeds of the world. His object in devoting so much time to these practices was to find out whether they had any real value in the path which leads to perfection.

Sri Ramakrishna's mind was always open to Truth. He would not accept anything on second-hand authority. He would not believe in anything because it was written in a book or because it was declared by some great personage. He must know the Truth first hand. Before accepting any statement, he must realize it in his own life and then he would speak of his personal experience to others in order that they might gain benefit from it. For nearly twelve years before he appeared in public or made any disciples Sri Ramakrishna, like a scientific investigator, inquired into the beliefs of the various sects of every religion, followed their methods and performed their rituals and ceremonies with perfect faith and earnest devotion that he might realize the goal which could be reached by each of them. To his great surprise, however, he discovered that he arrived at Godconsciousness through each sectarian method. Whenever, furthermore, he desired to follow any particular path, there came to him a perfected soul of each sect who had realized the ideal, to direct him in that path. Everyone of these great saints recognized in Sri Ramakrishna the manifestation of divine powers, when in a short time he attained to that which they had not been able to acquire during years of austerity, worship and extreme devotion.

Having finished his investigations, he was ready to proclaim his message and give to the world the fruits of his own experience and realization. But unlike other spiritual teachers, he did not go out in search after his disciples and followers. As a fragrant flower does not hunt for bees but waits patiently for the bees to come, so the full-blown flower of spirituality in the form of Sri Ramakrishna waited for his disciples to come to him in the temple at Dakshineswara on the bank of the Ganges.

When Ramakrishna had attained to the highest ideal of each Yoga and had realized the spiritual oneness with the Absolute Brahman and the Mother of the universe, rumour spread from mouth to mouth that Ramakrishna had reached perfection in this life. People from all quarters began to crowd around him. Pandits and scholars of every nationality as well as hundreds of devout men and women of all sects came to see him and listen to his original and wonderful teachings. This was the beginning of his public life as spiritual leader and guide, which continued for nearly sixteen years. During this period he did nothing but help mankind by freely distributing the priceless jewels of spiritual truths which he had earned through such struggle, hardship and austerities.

His Spiritual Insight

Sri Ramakrishna had a marvellous intellect and keen insight into the true nature of things and events, and using the commonest occurrences of every-day life as illustrations, he succeeded in making the dull minds of wordly people grasp the spiritual depth, beauty and grandeur of his sublime ideals. He poured new life into every word that he uttered so as to touch the soul of his hearers. People listened with wonder and admiration to his original discourses on the most difficult problems concerning life and death, the nature and origin of the soul, the origin of the universe and our relation to God.

Realization of God

In this age of scientific rationalism, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna has shown to the world how the Lord of the universe can be realized and attained in this life, and no one except him

has ventured to go through all the tests of sceptics and agnostics to prove that he had attained to Godconsciousness. Those who have seen him, lived with him for years and watched him by day and by night, have proclamed before the world that he was the embodiment of the highest spiritual ideal of all nations, and that whosoever worships him with faith and reverence worships the latest manifestation of Divinity.

The Bhagavan proved by his example that wherever there is extreme longing to see God, there is the nearness of the realization of the absolute Truth. His life has given to the world a grand demonstration that even in this age Divinity can be reached and divine perfection can be acquired by one who is pure, chaste, simple and whose devotion is whole-hearted and whole-souled. We have neither seen nor heard of a character purer, simpler, more chaste, more truthful and more godly than that of this ideal Mahatman. He was like the personification of purity and chastity and the embodiment of truthfulness.

His life was the life of absolute renunciation. Earthly pleasures and comforts meant nothing to him. The only pleasure, comfort or happiness which he cared for was the blissful state of *samadhi* or Godconsciousness, when his soul, liberated from the bondage of body and mind, soared high in the infinite space of the Absolute. This *samadhi* was a natural state with Ramakrishna. He never had to make a special effort to attain it. We often heard him say that when he was four years old he went into *samadhi* at the sight of the beautiful colouring of a tropical cloud. This realization he always remembered and often described in his conversation. And as he grew older his *samadhi* or ecstasy became stronger and deeper.

His Samadhi

In his *samadhi*, his body would become absolutely motionless, his pulse and heart-beat imperceptible, his eyes would be half open and if anyone pressed his eyeball with the finger, his body would not move or show the least sign of sensation. He would remain in this state sometimes for a few minutes, sometimes for half an hour or an hour, and on one occasion he continued in it for three days and nights. Then he would come

down on the plane of sense-consciousness and relate his experiences. He had the power to separate himself from the cage of the physical organism and to go into this state of divine communion at his will and stay there as long as he wished. Frequently he told us that he reached such a height in *samadhi* that if he had been like an ordinary mortal he could never have returned to his body; that no mortal had ever come back from that kind of *samadhi*; and that the Divine Mother gave him this power to return to this plane simply to help mankind and to establish his mission.

His Renunciation

To him God was father, mother, brother, sister, and everything. He recognized no earthly relations. He never coveted for wealth, nor had he any earthly possession. He realized that gold had no more value than earth and became absolutely unattached to riches, understanding the transitoriness of the objects which can be acquired by wealth. He often said that immortality could not be purchased by money, and emphasized by his example the true meaning of the vedic passage: "Neither by meritorious deed, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone the immortal Truth can be acquired". Renunciation of the attachment to wordly things is the gate to Godconsciousness. Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, Sankaracharya and all other Saviours and spiritual leaders of the world exemplified this by living the life of absolute renunciation. It is very rare to find in this age a perfect ideal of the renunciation of lust and of wordly attachment. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna practised the ideal of the renunciation of riches to such an extent that he was able to make his body respond involuntarily to the touch of coin by shrinking from it even in sound sleep. We have often seen him suffer pain when he was obliged to touch a coin of any metal. Who could be a more perfect ideal of renunciation in this age of materialism!

He Uplifted Womanhood

Sri Ramakrishna taught that every woman, old or young, was the representative of the Divine Mother. He worshipped God as the Mother of the universe and frequently declared that

his Divine Mother had shown him that all women represent Divine Motherhood on earth. For the first time in the religious history of the world was this ideal preached by any Divine Incarnation. And upon this depends the salvation of men and especially of women of all countries from immortality, corruption and such other vices as prevail in a civilized community.

By his living example the Bhagavan established the truth of spiritual marriage on the soul plane even in this age of sensuality. He had a wife whom he always treated with reverence and whom he regarded as the manifestation of his Divine Mother. He never had any sex relation with her or with any woman on the physical plane. His wife, the Blessed Virgin Sarada Devi, had lived like an embodiment of holy Motherhood with innumerable spiritual children around her. She in turn had always regarded the Bhagavan as her blessed Divine Mother in a human form. Up to the last moment of his earthly career the Bhagavan was absolutely pure, chaste, and a perfect child of the Divine Mother of the universe. Furthermore, Ramakrishna uplifted the ideal of womanhood on the spiritual plane by accepting his first *Guru* or spiritual instructor in a woman form. No other Saviour or spiritual leader has ever given such an honour to womanhood in the annals of religious history.

His Mission

The mission of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was to show by his living example how a truly spiritual man, being dead to the world of senses, can live on the spiritual plane of Godconsciousness; it was to prove that each individual soul is immortal and potentially divine. His mission was to establish harmony between religious sects and creeds. For the first time it was absolutely demonstrated by Ramakrishna that all religions are like so many paths leading to the same goal, that the realization of the same Almighty Being is the highest ideal of Christianity, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, as well as of all other smaller religions of the world. Sri Ramakrishna's mission was to proclaim the eternal Truth that God is one but has many aspects, and that the same one is worshipped by different nations under various names and forms; that He is personal, impersonal and beyond both; that He is with name

and form and yet nameless and formless. His mission was to establish the worship of the Divine Mother and thus to elevate the ideal of womanhood into Divine Motherhood. His mission was to show by his own example that true spirituality can be transmitted and that salvation can be obtained through the grace of a Divine Incarnation. His mission was to declare before the world that psychic powers and the power of healing are obstacles in the path of the attainment of Godconsciousness.

His Divine Powers

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna possessed all the Yoga powers, but he seldom exercised those powers. especially the power of healing diseases. Moreover, he always prevented his disciples from either seeking or exercising those powers. But one power which we have seen him frequently to exercise was the divine power to transform the character of a sinner and to lift a wordly soul to the plane of superconsciousness by a single touch. He would take the sins of others upon his own soulders and would purify them by transmitting his own spirituality and opening the spiritual eyes of his true followers.

The days of prophecy have passed before our eyes. The manifestations of the divine powers of one who is worshipped today by thousands as the latest Incarnation of Divinity, we have witnessed with our eyes. Blessed are they who have seen him and touched his holy feet. May the glory of Sri Ramakrishna be felt by all nations of the earth; may his divine power be manifested in the earnest and sincere soul of his devotees of all countries in all ages to come, is the prayer of his child and servant, Abhedananda.

CHAPTER I

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AT THE TEMPLE OF DAKSHINESWARA

WHERE RAMAKRISHNA LIVED

Bhagavan[1] Sri Ramakrishna lived for many years in Rani Rashmani's celebrated temple garden on the astern bank of the Ganges in the village of Dakshineswara about four miles north of Calcutta. This temple with the garden attached was dedicated by its foundress (Rani Rashmani) to the Divine Mother (Kali). In the northwest corner of the spacious temple-compound is a small room which faces on the west the water of the sacred river Ganges. This room with its holy surroundings was consecrated as the dwelling place for many years of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, whose divine presence made the spot holier and more sacred. It was from this retired corner that the rays of his divine glory, emanating from his God-intoxicated soul, dazzled the eyes of the seekers after Truth and attracted them to him as a blazing fire attracts moths from all quarters. Hundreds of educated men and women were drawn towards this superhuman personality to listen with the deepest reverence to the words of wisdom uttered by one who had realized God and who lived in constant communion with the Divine Mother of the universe.

MAHENDRA'S VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

One Sunday in the month of March, 1882, Mahendra,[2] hearing from a friend about this divine man, was so deeply

[1] 'Bhagavan' is a Sanskrit word meaning "The Blessed Lord". When the word is used without the accent on 'a' of the last syllable it signifies the vocative case used in addressing a Saviour.

[2] Mahendra, whose full name was Babu Mahendra Nath Gupta, was also popularly known as 'Sree M'. He was a professor of English literature of Calcutta University. He was a devoted householder disciple of Ramakrishna and the author of the *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* in Bengali and the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* in English. He was the only one who kept a diary of the events which are now translated and embodied in the present volume.

impressed that he came to the temple garden to pay him a respectful visit. It was the day of a special religious festival and people had gathered in great numbers in Sri Ramakrishna's room and on the *veranda*. The Bhagavan was seated on a raised platform, and on the floor around him were Kedar, Suresh, Rama, Manomohan, Bijoy and many other devotees. They gazed up into his radiant face and drank the nectar of the living words of divine wisdom that fell from his hallowed lips. With a smiling face Sri Ramakrishna was speaking to them of the power of the Lord's holy name and true *bhakti* as the means of attaining God-vision. Addressing Bijoy,[3] he asked: "What do you say is the means of attaining to God ?"

BIJOY: "Bhagavan, by the repetition of His holy name. In this age the holy name of the Lord has saving powers."

POWER OF THE LORD'S HOLY NAME

THE BHAGAVAN: "Yes, the holy name has saving powers, but there must be earnest longing with it. Without earnest longing of the heart no one can see God by mere repetition of His name. One may repeat His name, but if one's mind be attached to lust and wealth, that will not help much. When a man is bitten by a scorpion or a tarantula, mere repetition of a *mantram* will not do ; a special remedy is necessary".

BIJOY: "If that be the case, Bhagavan, then how did Ajamila,[4] who was the greatest of sinners and committed all sorts of crimes, obtain salvation by repeating the name of the Lord at the time of his death ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "Perhaps in the previous incarnations Ajamila was righteous and performed a great many good deeds. Besides, it is said that he practised asceticism later in this life. It may also be said that at the last moment of his life the repetition of the holy name purified his heart and therefore he

[3] Bijoy whose full name was Bijoy Krishna Goswami, was the celebrated preacher, lecturer, writer and spiritual teacher (Acharya) of the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta.

[4] Ajamila was the name of a sinner who received salvation by repeating the name of the Lord (which was also the name of his son) at the last moment of his life. The story of his life is given in the *Puranas* and is well-known to the Hindus.

attained salvation. When an elephant is washed, immediately he throws dust and dirt over himself; but if he is kept in a clean stall after his bath, then he cannot cover himself with dirt. By the power of the holy name a man may be purified, but he may once more commit sinful acts because his mind is weak. He cannot promise that he will never sin again. The water of the Ganges may wash away past sins, but there is a saying that sins perch like birds on the top of trees. When a man comes out after a dip in the Ganges and stands under a tree, the sins drop over his shoulders and seize upon him; these old sins ride him, as it were. Therefore, repeat the holy name of the Lord, but at the same time pray to Him that you may have true love and devotion for Him and that your love for wealth, fame and the pleasures of the body may decrease because they are transitory, they last only until tomorrow."

All Religions Lead to God

"When there is true devotion and love, one can reach God by any of the sectarian religions. The Vaishnavas, the worshippers of Krishna, will attain God in the same way as the Saktas, the worshippers of the Divine Mother, or the followers of Vedanta. Those who belong to the Brahmo Samaj,[5] the Mohammedans and the Christians, will also realize God through their respective religions. If you follow any of these paths with intense devotion, you will reach Him. If there be any mistake in the path chosen, He will correct the mistake in the long run. The man who wishes to see Jagannath[6] may go towards the south instead of towards the north, but some one will sooner or later direct him in the right way and he will surely visit Jagannath in the end. The one thing necessary for realization is whole-hearted and whole-souled devotion to God."

[5] Brahmo Samaj is the name of Hindu unitarian church founded by Raja Rammohan Roy in 1830 A.D. It has now various branches in India. The original organization is now known as the Adi Samaj. Keshab Chandra Sen was the founder of the sect called *New Dispensation*, while Shivanath Sastri was the founder of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

[6] Jagannath literally means the "Lord of the Universe". There is a great temple at Puri in India where the Car festival takes place every year. Hence the common expression "The Car of Jagannath".

MANY NAMES OF ONE GOD

"Vaishnavas, Mohammedans, Christians and Hindus are all longing for the same God; but they do not know that He who is Krishna, is also Siva, Divine Mother, Christ and Allah. God is one, but He has many names. The Substance is one, but is worshipped under different names according to the time, place and nationality of His worshippers. All the different scriptures of the world speak of the same God. He who is described in the Vedas as the absolute existence-intelligence-bliss, or the Brahman, is also described in the Tantras[7] as Siva, in the *Puranas*[8] as Krishna, in the Koran as Allah, and in the Bible as Christ. Yet the various sects quarrel with one another. The worshippers of Krishna, for instance, say that nothing can be achieved without worshipping Krishna; those who are devoted to the Divine Mother think that the worship of the Divine Mother is the only way to salvation; similarly, the Christians say that no one can reach heaven except through Christ; he is the only way and Christianity is the only religion, all other religions are false."

BIGOTRY IS NOT RIGHT

"This is narrow-mindedness. 'My religion is true while that of others is false',—this kind of belief is not right. It is not our business to correct the errors of other religions. He who has created the world, will correct them in time. Our duty is in some way or other to realize Him. God can be reached through many paths; each of these sectarian religions points out a path which ultimately leads to Divinity. Yes, all religions are paths, but the paths are not God. I have seen all sects and all paths. I do not care for them any more. People belonging to these sects quarrel so much against one another! After trying all religions, I have realized that God is the Whole and I am His part; that He is the Lord and I am His servant; again I realize, He is I; I am He."

[7] The Tantras are sacred writings of the Saiva and Sakta sects among the Hindus.

[8] The *Puranas* are the sacred scriptures of the Hindus next in authority to the Vedas. There are 18 great *Puranas* and many smaller *Puranas*.

God Personal and Impersonal

People dispute amongst themselves, saying: "God is personal with form. He cannot be impersonal and formless,'—like the Vaishnavas who find fault with those who worship the impersonal Brahman. When realization comes, then all these questions are settled. He who has seen God, can tell exactly what He is like. As Kabira[9] said: "God with form is my Mother, God without form is my Father. Whom shall I blame, whom shall I praise ? The balance is even." He is with form, yet He is formless. He is personal, yet He is impersonal, and who can say what other aspects He may have !"

Parable of the Elephant and the Blind Men

"Four blind men went to see an elephant. One touched a leg of the elephant and said: "The elephant is like a pillar." The second touched the trunk and said: "The elephant is like a thick club." The third touched the belly and said: "The elephant is like a huge jar." The fourth touched the ears and said: "The elephant is like a big winnowing-basket". Then they began to dispute among themselves as to the figure of the elephant. A passer-by, seeing them thus quarrelling, asked them what it was about. They told him everything and begged him to settle the dispute. The man replied: "None of you have seen the elephant. The elephant is not like a pillar, its legs are like pillars. It is not like a big water-jar, its belly is like a water-jar. It is not like a winnowing-basket, its ears are like winnowing-baskets. It is not like a stout club, its trunk is like a club. The elephant is like the combination of all these." In the same manner do those sectarians quarrel who have seen only one aspect of the deity. He alone who has seen God in all His aspects, can settle all disputes".

[9] Kabira was a Hindu saint who lived between 1488 and 1512 A.D. Rising from the low caste of a weaver he became the founder of a Vaishnava sect called after his name the *Kabira-panth*. His teachings were so broad and universal that they were accepted by the Mohammedans as well as the Hindus of all castes. Even now there are thousands among the lower classes of the Hindus who regard him as their spiritual master.

Parable of the Chameleon

"Again, two persons were hotly disputing as to the colour of a chameleon. One said: "The chameleon on that palm-tree is of red colour". The other contradicting him, replied: "You are mistaken, the chameleon is not red but blue". Not being able to settle the matter by argument, both went to the person who always lived under that tree and had watched the chameleon in all its phases of colour. One of them asked him: "Sir, is not the chameleon on that tree red ?" The person replied: "Yes, sir". The other disputant said: "What do you say ? It is not red, it is blue". The person again humbly replied: "Yes, sir". The person knew that the chameleon is an animal which constantly changes its colour ; thus it was that he said 'yes' to both these conflicting statements. The *sat-chit-ananda* or the absolute existence-intelligence-bliss likewise has many forms. The devotee who has seen God in one aspect only, knows Him in that aspect alone. But he who has seen Him in manifold aspects is alone in a position to say with authority: "All these forms are of one God and God is multiform". He is formless and with form, and many are His forms which no one knows".

Different Aspects of Divinity

"God is not only personal and with form but He can take the form of Krishna, Christ or any other Incarnation. It is true that He manifests Himself in infinite forms to fulfil the desires of His devotees. It is also true that He is formless indivisible Existence-Intelligence-Bliss or the Absolute. The Vedas have described Him to be both personal, with form and attributes, and impersonal, beyond all form and attributes. Do you know how this is ? He is like the infinite ocean of absolute existence-intelligence-bliss".

Relation between God Personal and Impersonal

"As in the ocean intense cold will freeze a portion of the water into ice which may float in various forms on the water, similarly intense devotion (*bhakti*) may condense a portion of Divinity and make it appear in different

forms. The personal God with form exists for the sake of His Bhaktas (dualistic devotees). When the sun of wisdom rises, the block of ice melts and becomes water once more; above, below, and on every side the Infinite Being pervades. Therefore there is a prayer in the scriptures: "O Lord, Thou art personal with form. Thou art also impersonal and formless. Thou hast manifested Thyself in a human form and hast lived in our midst, but in the Vedas Thou art described as beyond speech and mind, unspeakable, imperceptible and unthinkable". But it can be said that for a certain class of Bhaktas He is eternally personal and always with form. There are places where the ice never melts, it becomes crystallized.

KEDARA[10]: "Bhagavan, it is also said in the scriptures: "O Lord, thou art beyond speech and mind, but I have described Thy personal form only, do Thou forgive me for this offence".

THE BHAGAVAN: "Yes, God is with form and also formless. No one can say positively that He is so much and no more. To a devotee (Bhakta, or lover of God) the Lord appears as a personal Being with form, but to one who has attained to the state of selfless *samadhi* through the path of discrimination and knowledge He is the formless, impersonal and absolute Brahman."

EVENING AT THE TEMPLE

Night had fallen and the priests were waving the lights before the shrines to the accompaniment of bells, cymbals and drums. From the southern end of the garden was wafted the sweet music played by the temple musicians upon flutes and other instruments—the music being carried far over the Ganges until it was lost. The breeze blowing from the south was gentle and fragrant with the sweet odour of many flowers. The moon was rising and the garden was soon bathed in its soft silvery light. It seemed as if nature as well as man was rejoicing and holding herself in readiness for the sacred ceremony of the *Arati* (*Aratrika*—evening service).

One by one the disciples began to take their leave. Mahendra and his friend, who had been visiting different

[10]Kedara was a great dualistic Bhakta, or a lover of God. He belonged to the Vaishnava sect of Chaitanya. He regarded Ramakrishna as the incarnation of divine love.

temples, now wended their way back through the grand quadrangle to Sri Ramakrishna's chamber. Coming up to the door of the room, they noticed that it was closed. Near the door stood a maid-servant named Brinda. Mahendra spoke to her, saying: "Well, my good woman, is the holy man in ?"

BRINDA: Yes, he is in his room.

MAHENDRA: I suppose he has many books to read and study ?

BRINDA: Oh dear, no: not a single one. Everything, even the highest truths, is spoken by his tongue. His words are all inspired.

MAHENDRA: Indeed! Is he now going through the evening service ? May we go in ? Will you kindly tell him of our anxiety to see him ?

BRINDA: Why, you may go in my children. Go in and take your seats before him.

Thereupon they entered the room. No other people were there. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was alone, seated as in the afternoon on the platform beside his bed. Incense was burning and the doors were closed. Mahendra saluted the Bhagavan with folded hands. A mat was pointed out on the floor. At his word Mahendra and his friend took their seats upon it. The Bhagavan asked him: "What is your name ? Where do you live ? What are you ? What has brought you to Barahanagar[11] ?"

Mahendra answered each of these questions, but he noticed that in the course of the conversation Sri Ramakrishna's mind was fixed upon some other object, on which he was meditating. He was only half-conscious of the physical plane and his attitude resembled that of a man quietly seated, rod in hand, intent on catching fish. When the float trembles and the fish bites, the man eagerly looks at the float, grasping the rod with all his strength. He does not talk to anyone, but his whole mind is fixed upon the float. Such was the Bhagavan's concentration at this moment. Mahendra learned afterwards that this was the state of Godconsciousness or *samadhi* which invariably came over him everyday during the evening service. Very often in this state he would become absolutely unconscious of the external world. Mahendra, observing his abstraction,

[11] Barahanagar is a suburb of Calcutta.

said to Sri Ramakrishna: "I am afraid, Bhagavan, that thou wouldst prefer to go through the evening service (*sandhya*) alone. In that case we will not disturb thee any more, but will call some other time".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA replied: "Oh no, you need not be in a hurry".

But he was silent again for a time. He then opened his lips and said: "*Sandhya*? Evening service? It is not that".

A short while after, Mahendra saluted the Bhagavan, who in turn bade him good-bye, saying: "Come again".

CHAPTER II

SRI RAMAKRISHNA WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE TEMPLE

The Bhagavan was in his room seated in his usual place on the small platform beside his bed. It was Sunday and the room was filled with a large number of devotees. Among them was a young college student only nineteen years of age named Narendra, who afterwards became the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda. Everyone noticed even at that time that he was a sincere and earnest seeker after truth and that his mind was above all worldly concerns. His eyes were shining with spiritual light, his face was aglow with innocence and simplicity, and his words were full of spiritual power. The Bhagavan was discoursing on worldly people who ridicule the worshippers of God.

Especially addressing Narendra, he asked: "What do you say, Narendra ? Worldly men will speak all manner of things against godly people, but they should act like the elephant. When an elephant passes through a public road, dogs run after him and bark at him ; but the elephant turns a deaf ear to their barking and goes on his own way. Suppose, my boy, people should speak ill of you behind your back, what would you think of them ?"

NARENDRA: "I would look upon them as a lot of barking dogs".

GOD DWELLS IN ALL

THE BHAGAVAN laughed and said: "No, my boy, do not go so far as that. You should love everyone ; but mix with good people. God dwells in all beings ; without Him nothing can exist. When Prahlada[1] realized Him, the Lord asked him to crave a boon. Prahlada replied: "When I have seen Thee,

[1] Prahlada was a great *Bhakta* who, from his childhood showed his extreme faith, love and devotion for the supreme Lord of the universe. He is the ideal *Bhakta* among the Hindus. His life is described in the *Puranas*.

what other boon do I need?" The Lord asked him again. He then prayed: 'If Thou wishest to grant me a boon, do Thou forgive those who have persecuted me'. Prahlada meant that by persecuting him they had persecuted the Lord dwelling within him. Know that God resides in all things animate and inanimate. Hence everything is an object of worship, be it men, beasts or birds, plants or minerals. In our relation with men all that we can do is to take heed to ourselves that we mix with good people and avoid bad company. It is true, however, that God resides in bad people also, yes, even in a tiger; but surely it does not follow that we should embrace a tiger. It may be asked: 'Why should we run away from a tiger when God is dwelling in that form?' To this the answer is that God, abiding in our hearts, directs us to run away from the tiger. Why should we not obey His will?"

Parable of the Disciple and the Mad Elephant

"In a certain forest there lived a sage who had a number of disciples. He taught his disciples the truth: "God dwells in all things. Knowing this, you should bend your knee before every object". One day a disciple went out into the forest for wood. On his way he saw a man riding a mad elephant and shouting: "Get out of the way, get out of the way! This is a mad elephant'. The disciple, instead of running away, remembered his master's teaching and began to reason: "God is in the elephant as well as in me. God cannot be hurt by God, so why should I run away?" Thus thinking, he stood where he was and saluted the elephant as he came nearer. The driver (*Mahut*) kept on shouting: "Get out of the way!" But the disciple would not move, until he was snatched up by the mad elephant and dashed to one side. The poor boy, bruised and bleeding, lay on the ground unconscious. The sage, hearing of the accident, came with his other disciples to carry him home. When after some time the unfortunate pupil recovered consciousness, he described what had happened. The sage replied: "My boy, it is true that God is manifest in everything. But if He is in the elephant, is He not equally manifest in the driver (*Mahut*)? Tell me why you did not pay heed to the warning of the driver?"

God in Everything

THE BHAGAVAN continued: "In the sacred scriptures it is written, 'God dwells in water'; but some water can be used for divine service, or for drinking purposes, some for bathing or washing, while dirty water cannot be touched even. In the same manner, although God resides in all human beings, still there are good men and bad men, there are lovers of God and those who do not love God. We should recognize Divinity in all, but we should not mix with bad people or with those who do not love God. Our relation with them must not be very close. It is wise to avoid the company of such people".

NARENDRA[2]: "What attitude should we hold when wicked people come to disturb our peace or do actually offend us?"

Resistance of Evil

THE BHAGAVAN: "A person living in society should have a little *tamas* (the spirit of resisting evil) for purposes of self-protection. But this is necessary only for outward show, its, object being to prevent the wicked from doing harm to you. At the same time you should not do actual injury to another on the ground that he has done injury to you".

Parable of the Snake and the Holy Man

There was a large venomous snake in a field. No one dared to go that way. One day a holy man (*Mahatma*) passed by that road and the serpent ran after the sage to bite him. But when the snake approached the holy man, he lost all his ferocity and was overpowered by the gentleness of the Yogi. Seeing him, the sage said: "Well, my friend, think you to bite me?" The snake was abashed and made no reply. At this the sage continued: "Hearken, friend; do not injure anyone in future". The snake bowed and nodded assent. The sage went his way, and the snake entered his hole and thenceforward began to live a life of innocence, without attempting to harm anyone. In a few days all the neighbourhood concluded that the snake had lost his venom and was no longer dangerous; so everyone

[2] Narendra was a Sannyasin disciple of Ramakrishna. He was afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda.

began to tease him. They pelted him with stones or dragged him mercilessly by the tail, and there was no end to his troubles. Fortunately the sage again passed that way, and seeing the bruised and battered condition of the snake, was very much moved and inquired into the cause. "Holy sir", the snake replied, "this is because I do not injure anyone after your advice. But alas! they are so merciless!" The sage smilingly said: "My friend, I simply advised you not to bite anyone; but I did not tell you not to frighten others. Although you should not bite any living creatures, still you should keep people at a distance by hissing at them." And Sri Ramakrishna added: "There is no harm in 'hissing' at wicked men and at your enemies, showing that you can protect yourself and know how to resist evil. Only you must be careful not to pour your venom into the blood of your enemy. Resist not evil by causing evil in return".

Love for All

One of the devotees present said: "But when a person is annoyed with me, Bhagavan, I feel unhappy. I feel that I have not been able to love everyone equally".

Ramakrishna: "When you feel that way, you should have a talk with that person and try to make peace with him. If you fail after such attempts, then you need not give it further thought. Take refuge with the Lord. Think upon Him. Do not let your mind be disturbed by any other thing".

Devotee: "Christ and Chaitanya have both taught us to love all mankind".

A True Devotee Always Calm

Ramakrishna: "You should love everyone because God dwells in all beings. But to wicked people you should bow down at a distance. (To Bijoy, smiling) Is it true that people blame you because you mix with those who believe in a personal God with form? A true devotee of God should possess absolute calmness and never be disturbed by the opinions of others. Like a blacksmith's anvil, he will endure all blows and persecutions and yet remain firm in his faith and always the same. Wicked people may say many things about you and blame you; but if you long for God, you should endure with patience.

Company of the Wicked

"One can think on God even dwelling in the midst of wicked people. The sages of ancient times, who lived in forests, could meditate on God although surrounded by tigers, bears, and other wild beasts. The nature of the wicked is like that of a tiger or bear. They attack the innocent and injure them. You should be especially cautious in coming in contact with the following: First, the wealthy. A person who possesses wealth and many attendants, can easily do harm to another if he so desires. You should be very guarded in speaking with him; sometimes it may even be necessary to agree with him in his opinion. Second, a dog. When a dog barks at you, you must not run, but talk to him and quiet him. Third, a bull. When a bull chases you, you should always pacify him by talking to him. Fourth, a drunkard. If you make him angry, he will call you names and swear at you. You should address him as a dear friend, then he will be happy and obliging".

"When wicked people come to see me, I am very careful. The character of some of them is like that of a snake. They may bite you unaware. It may take a long time and much discrimination to recover from the effects of that bite. Or you may get so angry at them that you will wish to take revenge. It is necessary, however, to keep occasionally the company of holy men. Through such association right discrimination will come".

Four Classes of Individual Souls

"There are four classes of *Jivas,* or individual souls: First, *Baddha,* the bound; second, *Mumukshu,* the seeker after freedom; third, *Mukta,* the emancipated; and fourth, *Nitya-mukta,* the eternally free. This world is like a net, the soul is the fish, and the Lord of the phenomenal world is the fisherman. When a fisherman draws in his net, some of the fish try to escape by rending the net, that is, they struggle for freedom. So are the souls of the second class, the *Mumukshus,* the seekers after freedom. But among the fish that struggle, only a few escape. Similarly, a few souls only attain to freedom and they belong to the third class, the *Muktas.* There are some fish, however, that are naturally cautious and never fall into

the net. Such are the souls of the fourth class, the *Nitya-muktas,* who are never caught in the net of the phenomenal world, but who remain eternally free, like Narada[3] and others like him. Most of the fish, however, fall into the net and have not the sense to know that they are going to die there. When caught, they try to run away and hide in the mud at the bottom by swimming with the net. They make no effort to get out of the net, but go deeper and deeper into the mud. These may be compared to the souls who are bound fast in the world. They are caught in the net, but they delude themselves by thinking that they are happy. They remain attached to worldliness. They plunge into the mire of worldly evils and are content, while those who are seeking after freedom or who are emancipated do not like worldliness and do not care for sense-pleasures".

Bound Souls

"Those who are thus caught in the net of the world are the *Baddhas* or bound souls. No one can awaken them. They do not come to their senses even after receiving blow upon blow of misery, sorrow, and indescribable suffering. The camel loves thorny bushes, and although his mouth bleeds when he eats them, still he does not cease to love them dearly and no one can keep him away from them. The bound souls may meet with great grief and misfortune, but after a few days they are just as they were before. The wife may die or become unchaste, the man will marry again; his son may die, he will be extremely sorrowful, but he will soon forget him. The mother of the boy may be overwhelmed with grief for a short time, but in a few days she will once more be concerned for her personal appearance and will deck herself with jewels and finery. Such worldly people may be left paupers after marrying their sons and daughters, yet they will still beget children every year. They may lose their fortune by a law suit, but they will again go to the courts. They may not be able to support their

[3] In the Hindu scriptures Narada is described as the ideal lover of God. He communed with the Lord under all conditions. The Lord Vishnu selected him as his most beloved messenger.

children, to educate, feed, clothe, or house them properly, still they will continue to have more. They are like the snake with a musk-rat in its mouth. As the snake cannot swallow the rat because of its strong odour, neither can it throw it out because of its own bent teeth, so these bound souls, *Baddhas,* although they may occasionally feel that the world is unreal, can neither give it up nor can they fix their minds on the Reality of the universe. I once saw a relative of Keshab Chundra Sen, who was quite old, still playing cards as if the time for meditating on God had not come for him.

"There is another sign of a *Baddha,* or a worldly soul. If you remove him from the world and put him in a better place, he will pine away and die. He will work like a slave to support his family, and he will not hesitate to tell lies and to deceive or flatter in order to earn his livelihood. He looks upon those who worship God or who meditate on the Lord of the universe as insane. He never finds time or opportunity to think of the spiritual subjects. Even at the hour of death he will think and talk of worldly things. Whatever thought is strongest in the minds of the worldly people, comes out at the time of death. If they become delirious, they crave of nothing but material objects. They may go to places of worship, but so long as their minds are attached to the world, worldly thoughts will rise at the last moment. As a parrot may be taught to utter the Lord's holy name, but when attacked by a cat, screams and gives its natural cry, so they (the worldly people, or the *samsaries*) may repeat the holy name of the Lord, but when attacked by death, the natural tendency of their minds will predominate. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* that the future is determined by the thought that is uppermost at the moment of death".

What Thou Thinkest Thou Shalt Become

In the *Purana,* there is a story that Bharata was born as a deer, because when he died, his mind was fixed on the thought of a deer. So he who passes away thinking of God and meditating on Him, does not come back to this world".

A DEVOTEE: "Bhagavan, will a man who thinks of God and does not meditate on Him at the time of death, be born again ?"

Concentration and Meditation

Sri Ramakrishna: "An ordinary soul who has no faith in God, may think of Him for a time, but easily forgets Him again and becomes attached to the world. If, however, he concentrates his mind upon God at the last moment of his life, his heart and soul become purified and remain so even after death. People suffer so much, because they have no faith in God. In order to be able to think of God at the time of death, we must prepare our mind by constant practice. The practice of meditation on God will create a tendency of mind to think of Him spontaneously even at the last moment".

A devotee: "Bhagavan, what condition of mind is necessary for a worldly person to attain to freedom?"

Ramakrishna: "If by the grace of the Lord strong dispassion or detachment (*vairagya*) for worldly things arises in his mind, then such a person becomes free from all earthly passion or attachment. What is this strong dispassion? Let me tell you.

Dispassion

Ordinary dispassion makes the mind think of the Lord occasionally, but there is no longing in the heart. Strong dispassion, on the contrary, makes the mind dwell constantly on the Lord with the same intense longing as a mother feels for her only child. He who has strong dispassion, does not want anything but the Lord. He looks at the world as a deep well and is always fearful lest he may fall into it. Earthly relations seem to him very distant. He does not seek their company. His whole heart and soul yearn for God. He does not think of his family, nor does he think of the morrow. He also possesses great spiritual force".

Parable of the Farmer and the Canal

"Let me explain this to you by a parable: In a certain place, there had been a long drought. The farmers were irrigating their fields by canals, bringing water from a long distance. One farmer had great determination and force of character. One morning he made up his mind that he would continue to dig his canal until he had connected it with the river and

brought the water to his field. He was so busy with digging that he lost account of time. The hour for luncheon came and passed. His wife called him to come home and to wash hands and feet and eat. She urged: 'The luncheon is getting cold, leave your work until tomorrow'. At first he paid no heed to her words, but when she repeated her request, he bade her go home and not disturb him any more. 'You have no sense', he said, 'with this terrible drought we cannot grow anything. There will be no food for the children, the whole family will die of starvation. I have resolved that this very day I shall bring the water of the river to my field; then I shall think of washing and eating'. Hearing this, his wife ran home. The farmer worked hard the whole day and towards the evening he joined the canal to the river and sat on one side with great delight as he saw the stream of water running into his field. His mind was then peaceful and happy. He went home and called his wife, saying: 'Now give me a little oil and get my hookah ready.' Then he washed his hands and feet and ate a hearty dinner and enjoyed a sound sleep. This kind of determination of the mind and firmness of purpose must be at the back of strong dispassion. Another farmer who was trying to bring water to his field, was likewise called by his wife at the hour of the noonday meal. 'It is getting late, come home, and wash and eat', she said, and at once he dropped his spade and replied: 'My dear, when you ask me to go, I must go'. So his field remained dry. As the farmer could not irrigate his field, so a devotee cannot attain to God without firm determination.

"When God is attained through such strong dispassion, all worldly attachment fades away[1]. A householder may then live with his family, but he becomes unattached and there is no more danger of bondage for him. If there be two magnets, one very large and the other very small, which do you suppose will attract a piece of iron? The larger one of course. God is the greatest magnet. Compared to His, his attraction of the world is smaller and less powerful".

A DEVOTEE: "Bhagavan, why are we so bound to the world that we cannot see God?"

[1] This kind of dispassion or detachment is known as real *vairagya*.

Sense of 'I'

Ramakrishna: "The sense of 'I' in us is the greatest obstacle in the path of God-vision. It covers the truth. When 'I' is dead, all troubles cease. If by the mercy of the Lord one realizes 'I am a non-doer (*a-karta*); instantly that man becomes emancipated in this life. This sense of 'I' (*aham*) is like a thick cloud. As a small cloud can hide the glorious sun, so this cloud of 'I' hides the glory of the Eternal Sun. If the cloud (of ignorance) is dispersed by the mercy of a *Guru,* or spiritual master, the glory of the Infinite becomes visible. When Rama, the Divine Incarnation in a human form (Universal Soul) was walking in the forest, Lakshmana (the individual soul) who was at a short distance, could not see him, because Sita or *maya,* or the sense of 'I', was standing between. Look at me. I cover my face with this handkerchief and you cannot see me; still my face is there. So, God is the nearest of all, but, because of the sense of 'I', you do not see Him. The soul, in its true nature, is absolute existence, intelligence and bliss, but on account of *maya,* or the sense of 'I', it has forgotten its real Self and has become entangled in the meshes of the various limitations of mind and body".

Money is Power

"Each attribute limits the Soul and modifies its Divine nature. He who dresses smartly, will naturally sing love songs, play cards and carry a walking stick and such things will appeal to him. If you have a pencil in your hand, you will unconsciously scribble on anything, and such is the power of the pencil. Money has great power. When a man becomes wealthy, his nature is entirely changed. Then he is a different being. A poor Brahmin, for instance, used to come here. He was very humble. He lived on the other side of the Ganges. One day as I was landing from a boat, I saw him sitting at the riverside. Seeing me, he shouted in a disrespectful tone: 'Hello! is it you, my good fellow?' Immediately I understood by his manner that he had got hold of some money, otherwise he would not dare to address me thus. A toad somehow got an eight-anna bit and kept it concealed in its hole. An elephant was coming that way and passed over the hole. The toad was very angry,

and it came out and kicked the elephant, saying: 'How darest thou pass over me ?' Such is the power of wealth! It makes one so egotistic".

Seven Stages of Spiritual Evolution

"This sense of 'I', however, vanishes at the approach of Divine wisdom which leads to superconsciousness (*samadhi*) and eventually to Godconsciousness. But it is very difficult to acquire this Divine wisdom. It is said in the Vedas that when the mind reaches the seventh stage (*saptam bhumi*) of spiritual evolution, the soul enters into *samadhi* and instantly its sense of 'I' disappears. When the mind dwells in the first three stages which are the realms of worldly tendencies and animal propensities, it becomes attached to lust and wealth. When the mind dwells in the purified heart, spiritual light is perceived by the soul. At that time the soul exclaims: 'What is this! What is this!' When it rises near the throat and remains there, the devotee loves to hear about God and to speak of God. When the mind rises still higher, near the space between the eyebrows (*ajna-chakra*), it beholds the vision of the Infinite Being whose nature is absolute existence-intelligence-bliss. The soul then desires to touch and embrace that Being, but fails. As a light within a lantern can be seen, but cannot be touched from outside, so the soul beholds the vision, but cannot lay hold on it, cannot enter into it, and cannot become one with it. In the seventh stage, however, the mind is bereft of the sense of 'I', enters into Godconsciousness and realizes its oneness with the Infinite".

Devotee: "Bhagavan, what happens after reaching the seventh stage when Divine wisdom comes ? What does the man see ?"

Ramakrishna: "It cannot be described by words. In the seventh stage, when the mind goes into its causal form, *samadhi* comes and what happens then no one can tell".

Difference between Soul and God

"This sense of 'I' which makes one worldy and attached to lust and wealth, is the cause of bondage. The difference between the Supreme and the individual soul is created by this

sense of 'I' which stands between. If you hold a stick on the surface of a stream, the water will appear to be divided into two parts, but, in reality, the water is one. It appears as two because of the stick. The sense of 'I' may be compared to this stick. Remove this limiting adjunct (*upadhi*) and the current will be one and unbroken. What is this sense of 'I' which clings to man ? That which says: 'I' am this, I am that. I possess so much wealth. I am great and powerful; who is greater than 'I' ? If a thief has stolen ten rupees and been detected, the owner takes his money first, then beats him, then hands him over to the police and finally puts him in jail. The worldly 'I' says: 'Doesn't he know that he stole ten rupees which belonged to me ? How dared he ?"

The Worldly 'I'

Devotee: "Bhagavan, if we cannot get rid of worldliness except by losing the sense of 'I' in *samadhi,* is it not better to follow the path of wisdom which leads to *samadhi,* since in the path of devotion the sense of 'I' (*aham-bodha*) still remains ?"

Difficult to be Rid of 'I'
Servant 'I' of a Bhakta

Ramakrishna: "Very few can get rid of the sense of 'I' through *samadhi.* It generally clings to us. We may discriminate a thousand times, but the sense of 'I' is bound to return again and again. You may cut the branches of a fig-tree today, but tomorrow you will see that new twigs are sprouting. If this sense of 'I' will not leave, then let it stay as the servant of God. 'O God! Thou art my Lord, I am Thy servant!' Think in this way: 'I am His servant, I am His Bhakta, or devotee'. There is no harm in this kind of 'I'. Sweet things cause dyspepsia and acidity, but crystallized sugar-candy is harmless. The path of wisdom is very difficult. It cannot be followed so long as the sense of 'I' is connected with the body. In this age, the consciousness of the body and the sense of 'I' cannot be overcome easily. But, in the path of devotion, through prayer and repetition of His holy name with extreme longing, God can be reached without fail".

Devotee: "Bhagavan, dos't thou teach us to renounce the worldly 'I' and not the sense of the servant 'I' ?"

Ramakrishna: "Yes, 'I am the servant of God', 'I am His devotee', this kind of egoism is not bad, but, on the contrary, it helps us to realize God".

Devotee: "Bhagavan, does he who has the sense of the servant 'I' possess passion and anger ?"

A child's 'I'

Ramakrishna: "If this attitude of a servant be genuine and perfect, then passion and anger will drop off leaving only a scar in the mind. This 'I' of a Bhakta or devotee does no harm to any living creature. It is like a sword which, after touching the philosopher's stone, is turned to gold. The sword retains the same form, but is cannot cut or injure anyone. The dry leaves of the cocoanut-tree drop off in the wind, leaving a mark on the trunk, and that mark proves that there was a leaf at one time. Similarly, the scar of the sense of 'I' remains in the mind of one who has realized God, but his whole nature is transformed into that of an innocent child. The child's sense of 'I' is not attached to worldly objects. He may like a thing at one moment, but the next moment he may dislike it. You can take from him an object of great value by giving him a doll worth a penny. So to a child everyone is equal; there is none greater or smaller. Therefore a child has no sense of caste or creed. If his mother says: 'He is your brother', however low his caste may be, the child will sit with him and eat with him without feeling dislike or difference of any kind".

True Devotion and Love.

"Some Bhaktas after attaining to *samadhi* or Godconsciousness, when they return, retain the sense of 'I', as 'I am His servant, I am His devotee'. They do not lose the sense of 'I' entirely, but keep a small portion of it to repeat the holy name of the Lord, to sing His praises, and to love and serve Him. Again, those who constantly practise this sense of 'servant I' (dasa-ami) eventually reach the Supreme Lord. This is the path of *bhakti* or devotion. But true devotion is very rare. True devotion leads to intense love for God, and when that

intense love comes, the Divine Being is not very far. In that intense love, the sense of worldliness is wiped out entirely and the whole heart and soul rest upon nothing but the Lord of the universe. Some are born with this intense love for God, and it is natural with them. Its expression is to be found even in their childhood. At that tender age even, they cry for God. There are many examples of such born Bhaktas like Prahlada and others. Ordinary devotion which is confined by scriptural laws of sacrifice and worship, is preparatory. As, in hot weather, one fans oneself for a breath of air, so long as the breeze is not blowing, but when the breeze springs up, the fan is no longer needed ; so when the breeze of intense love begins to blow in the soul, all devotional exercises like repetition of the name of the Lord, sacrifice, prayers, and asceticism become unnecessary. Devotion without intense love is the sign of unripe *bhakti*. When it ripens, it leads into Divine love, which is perfect and which brings the highest realization".

A DISCIPLE: "Bhagavan, how can God be realized ?"

PURE HEART
GOD IS LIKE A MAGNET
POWER OF REPENTANCE

RAMAKRISHNA: "God can be realized by the purified heart alone.[5] Ordinarily the mind is stained with worldliness. The mind may be compared to a needle. If a needle be covered with thick mud, it is not attracted by the magnet; but when the mud is washed off, the magnet attracts it. Similarly, when the mind is covered with the mud of worldliness, it does not feel the attraction of the Lord ; but whosoever repents, saying: 'O Lord, I shall never again commit such an act', and sheds tears of true repentance, washes off all impurities and the magnet of the Lord then attracts the needle of the mind. Instantly superconsciousness comes and is followed by God-vision.

[5] Sri Ramakrishna has said that the Brahman cannot be reached by mind and speech, but can be reached by the purified mind (*vakya-maner agochara, knitu shuddha maner gochara*). In truth, the mind is known by its modifications of *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*, but when mind (heart) is purified, then these modifications are stilled or removed and the mind shines in its own form (*swarupe*) which is no other than pure consciousness.

The Mercy of the Lord

"A man may make thousands of attempts, but nothing can be accomplished without the mercy of the Lord. Without His mercy no one can see Him. Nor is it an easy thing to obtain His mercy. The egotistic sense of 'I' which says: 'I am the doer', must be abandoned entirely before the divine mercy can be felt. So long as there is a steward in charge of the storehouse, if any one come to the master and beg him, saying: 'Master, wilt thou not come to the storehouse and give me this thing?' he will reply: 'The steward is there, what need have I to go? In like manner, so long as the ego thinks of himself aas the 'doer' (*karta*) and the master of the storehouse of the heart, the real master does not enter there. The mercy of the Lord is the surest way of God-vision.

God, the Sun of Wisdom

He is the sun of wisdom. A single ray of this Eternal Sun illumines this world, and by that light we are conscious of ourselves and of one another and we acquire various kinds of knowledge. If He turns that light towards His own face, He becomes visible to His Bhakta or devotee".

Illustration of a Bull's-Eye Lantern

"In the night, the watchman goes from place to place everyone's face and people see each other, but no one can see him. If anyone wishes to see the watchman, he must beg him to turn the light towards himself. Similarly, he who wishes to see the Lord must pray to Him thus: 'O Lord, in Thy mercy do Thou turn the light of Thy wisdom towards Thine own face that I may behold Thee'. If there be no light in a house, that is the sign of extreme poverty. Therefore one must light the lamp of wisdom within the heart. 'O mind, why dost thou not see the face of the Divine Mother by lighting the lamp of wisdom in the chamber of the soul!'"

CHAPTER III

THE BHAGAVAN WITH CERTAIN OF HIS HOUSEHOLDER DISCIPLES

God is Formless and with Form

One day in winter a certain householder disciple who was a college professor, came to see the Bhagavan. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the outside *veranda* of his room and he was smiling. After a short conversation he asked: "Do you prefer to mediate on God with form or without form?" The disciple hesitated and answered. "I prefer to meditate upon God as the formless Being rather than as a Being with form". The Bhagavan replied: "That is good. There is no harm in looking at Him from this or the other point of view. Yes, to think of Him as the formless Being is quite right. But do not go away with the idea that that alone is true and that all else is false. Meditation upon Him as a Being with form is equally right. You, however, must hold on to your particular conception of God until you have realized and seen God".

Image-Worship

The disciple asked: "Bhagavan, one may believe that God is with form, but surely He is not in the earthen images that are worshipped?" Sri Ramakrishna replied: "My dear sir, why do you say earthen images? The image of the Divine Being is made of the spirit".

The disciple could not understand the meaning of this, but answered: "Yet should it not be one's duty to make clear to those who worship images that God is not the same as the images and that at the time of worship they should think of God Himself and not of the image made of clay?"

The Bhagavan said: "The Lord of the universe teaches mankind: He who has made the sun and moon, men and brutes, has also created things for them to live upon parents to tend and rear them; He who has done so many things, will

surely do something to correct the mistakes of the erring people and bring them to the light. The Lord dwells in the temple of the human body. He knows our innermost thoughts. If there is anything wrong in image worship, does He not know that all worship is meant for Him? He will be pleased to accept it knowing that it is for Him. Why should you worry yourself about things which are beyond your reach? Try to realize God and love Him. This is your first duty.

"You speak of images made of clay. Well, there often comes a necessity for worshipping such images and symbols. In Vedanta, it is said that the absolute Existence-Intelligence-Bliss pervades the universe and manifests Itself through all forms. What harm is done by worshipping the Absolute through images and symbols? We see little girls with their dolls. How long do they play with them? So long as they are not married. After marriage they put away those dolls. Similarly, one needs images and symbols so long as God is not realized in His true form. It is God Himself who has provided these various forms of worship. The Master of the universe has done all this to suit different men in different stages of spiritual growth and knowledge. The mother so arranges the food for her children that each one gets what is best for him. Suppose a mother has five children with one fish to cook for all. She will make different dishes of it that she may give to each just what suits him,—the rich *polao* for one, soup for another, fried fish for a third, fish with sour tamarind for a fourth, and so on, exactly according to the power of digestion of each. Do you now understand?"

THE DISCIPLE replied: "Yes, Bhagavan, now I do. But, revered sir, how can one fix one's mind on God?"

HOW TO FIX ONE'S MIND ON GOD

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "To that end one must always sing forth the holy name of God and talk without ceasing of His glory and attributes. Then one must seek the company of holy men. One must from time to time visit the Lord's devotees or those who have given up attachment to the things of the world for the sake of the Lord. It is, however, difficult to fix one's mind upon God in the midst of worldly cares and anxieties;

Solitude Necessary

hence the necessity of going into solitude now and again with a view to meditating on Him. In the first stage of one's spiritual life, one cannot do without solitude. When plants are young, they stand in need of fences around them for their protection; otherwise goats and cattle will destroy them. The depth of the heart, the retired corner, and the forest (*bane, mane, kona*) are the three places for meditation. One should also practise discrimination. One should discriminate between the real and the unreal, between the matter and the spirit. It is thus that one will shake off one's love for the things of the world and attachment to sensual pleasures, wealth, fame and power".

Avadhuta and a Kite

Then turning to Bijoy, who had come in, the Bhagavan continued: "Shivanath, the leader of the Brahmo Samaja, has great cares, he has to edit a newspaper and do various other works. In attending to worldly affairs, one naturally loses peace of mind and is overwhelmed with worries and anxieties. It is said in the Bhagavata that Avadhuta[1] made twenty-four *Gurus*. The kite was one of them. In a certain place some fishermen were catching fish, a kite swooped down and snatched a fish. Seeing the kite with the fish in his claws, hundreds of crows flew after him and began to caw, making a great noise. In whatever direction the kite flew, the crows followed. When he flew to the south, they pursued him; when he flew to the north, they were after him, and he found no peace in any direction. At last the kite dropped the fish. Then the crows flew after the fish and the kite rested calmly on the branch of a high tree. He thought within himself: 'That fish was the cause of all this trouble. Now that I no longer have it, I am happy and in perfect peace'. The Avadhuta learned from this kite that as long as a man is attached to worldly objects, so long he has toil, cares, anxiety, unrest and unhappiness. When attachment is

[1] 'Avadhuta' is a Sanskrit title which is given to one who has become the absolute master of nature and who has realized God. Such a great soul was Dattatreya. In the *Puranas*, he is called Avadhuta. He was also the author of the *Avadhuta-Gita*, a famous work on Advaita Vedanta.

gone, all works end, and then comes peace. But work without attachment is good ; it does not bring unrest.

Avadhuta and a Bee

"It is very difficult, however, to work and remain unattached. A few only can accomplish it. Those who have attained to Godconsciousness, like the sage Narada, work for the good of humanity. Avadhuta made another *Guru*—a bee. What trouble a bee takes to collect honey ! But it is not for its own use ; some one else comes and takes the honey from the comb. The Avadhuta learned from the bee that it is not wise to hoard anything. Truly spiritual men should depend absolutely upon God and should not desire to possess anything. But this is not possible for householders. They will have to support their families and therefore they should earn money and make provision for the future. A bird does not store any food in its nest, but when it has a number of young ones, then it brings food for them in its bill."

Practice of Non-Attachment

"Perform all your duties with your mind always fixed on God. As for your parents, wife and children, serve them as your own, but always remember they do not belong to you, that they are the children of God. You are also a child of God and your nearest and dearest friends are those who love God. The turtle moves about in the water in quest of food ; where do you think her mind is fixed then ? On the water's edge where her eggs are laid. In the same manner you may go about in the world, but take good care that your mind always rests upon the hallowed feet of the Lord".

Need of Solitude

"Suppose you have not acquired true love for the Lord. If in this state you enter the world, then you will surely get entangled. Misfortune, grief, misery, sorrow, suffering and the various diseases of the body will disturb the balance of your mind ; and the more you will throw yourself into the affairs of the world and trouble yourself about worldly matters, the more

your attachment to the world will be increased. Rub your hand with oil if you desire to break open the jackfruit, else the milky gum of the fruit will stick to your hands. First rub your soul with the oil of love and devotion to the Lord, then you may come in contact with the affairs of the world. But to this end solitude is the one thing needful. If you want butter, you must curdle the milk and set it in a place where no one can disturb it; otherwise the curd will not stand. Then churn it and the butter will rise. Similarly a neophyte should sit in solitude and not be disturbed by worldly-minded people; then through the churning of the settled mind by the practice of meditation the butter of divine love will be acquired. If you give your mind to God in solitude, you will obtain the spirit of true renunciation and absolute devotion but if you fix the same mind to the world, it will grow worldly and think of woman and gold.

"The world may be likened to water, and the mind to milk. Pure milk once mixed with water cannot be separated from it; but if it is first turned into butter and then placed in water, it can remain separate. Let the milk of your mind be turned into butter of divine love by means of religious practices in solitude. The mind then will never get mixed with the water of worldliness but will rise above and remain unattached to the world. Having attained true knowledge and devotion the mind will stand apart from the world".

Lust and Gold Unreal

"Along with this, practise discrimination. The objects of sense-pleasure are unreal; God is the only Reality. What uses has money? It can give one food, clothes, house, luxuries and comforts of life, but it cannot bring spiritual perfection or God-vision. Therefore the acquisition of wealth should not be the highest end and aim of life. In this manner you should discriminate. Similarly by discrimination you will overcome your attachment to personal beauty. Think what the body of a beautiful woman is made of. Like all bodies it is of flesh and blood, skin and bones, fat and marrow, etc. The wonder is that man loses sight of God and gives his mind purely to such transitory objects of senses".

The Disciple asked: "Bhagavan, is it possible to see God?"

MEANS OF GOD-VISION

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Certainly. The following are some of the means of seeing God: Going from time to time into solitude; singing forth His name and His attributes; and discrimination".

THE DISCIPLE: "Bhagavan, what state of mind leads to God-vision?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Cry to God with a yearning heart and then you will see Him. People will shed a flood of tears for the sake of their wife or children; they will be carried away by a stream of their own tears for the sake of money; but who sheds tears for God? Cry for Him, not for show, but with a longing and yearning heart. The rosy light of the dawn comes before the rising sun; likewise a longing and yearning heart is the sign of God-vision that comes after".

POWER OF TRUE FAITH AND TRUE LONGING

"Extreme longing is the surest way to God-vision. Through extreme longing the mind remains fixed on the Supreme Being. One should have faith like that of an innocent child and such longing as a child has when it wants to see its mother. There was a boy named Jatila. He used to go to school alone through the woods. Often he felt lonely and afraid. He told his mother about it and she said to him: 'Why art thou fearful, my child? Thou must call Krishna whenever thou art frightened'. 'Who is Krishna, mother?' the boy asked. The mother answered: 'Krishna is thy brother'. After that when Jatila was passing through the woods alone and felt frightened, he called aloud, 'Brother Krishna!' When no one came, he cried again: 'O Brother Krishna, where art thou? Come to me and protect me; I am frightened'. Hearing the call of this faithful child, Krishna could no longer remain away. He appeared in the form of a young boy and said: 'Here am I, thy brother! Why art thou frightened? Come with me, I will take thee to school'. Then having escorted him to school, Lord Krishna said to him: 'I will come to thee whenever thou callest me; do not be afraid'. Such is the power of true faith and true longing".

How to Love God

"You can see God if your love for Him be as strong as the strength of these three attachments put together: namely, the attachment of a miser to his wealth, that of a mother to her new-born child, and that of a chaste wife to her husband.

"To see God one must love Him with the whole heart and soul. One must make one's prayers reach the Divine Mother. Absolute self-resignation to the will of the Divine Mother is the surest way to God-vision. As the kitten resigns itself to the will of its mother, so a devotee shall resign himself to the will of the Divine Mother. The kitten knows nothing more than to cry 'mew, mew,' and the mother-cat may keep her young one on the bare floor of the kitchen or on the downy bed of the householder. The kitten is always contented. Similarly, the true devotee should always cry unto the Divine Mother and be contented with whatever She wishes to do with him".

Fetters of the Soul

"Godconsciousness does not come so long as there are three things in the heart,—shame, hatred and fear. These three and the pride of one's caste are the fetters of the soul. When these fetters are broken, freedom is attained. Bound by fetters is *jiva* (the ego), free from fetters is Siva (God)".

Madness of Divine Love

"Every man has certain debts to pay: a debt to the Divine Spirit, a debt to the sages, debt to mother, to father, to the wife. No man can renounce everything without paying off these debts. But if his soul be intoxicated with divine love and become mad after God, then he is free from all duties and debts. Then who is his father, who is his mother, and who is his wife ? He behaves like a mad man who is free from all bondage and who has no duty to perform. Do you know what that madness of divine love is ? In that state, one forgets the world and becomes unconscious of one's own body which is so dear to one. Chaitanya Deva possessed this madness of ecstasy. He had neither hunger, nor thrist, nor sleep, nor consciousness of his physical

form. The meaning of the word 'Chaitanya' is 'indivisible and absolute intelligence'. Vaishnava Charan used to say that Chaitanya Deva, the Incarnation of Divine Love, was like a bubble on the ocean of that absolute Intelligence".

Divine Love and Ecstasy

"Divine love is the rarest thing in the world. He who can love God as a devoted wife loves her husband, attains to Divine love. Pure love is difficult to acquire. In pure love the whole heart and soul must be absorbed in God. Then will come ecstasy. In ecstasy, a man remains dumb with wonder. Respiration stops entirely, but breath of life continues; as when aiming a gun, a man remains speechless and without breathing. In Divine love one entirely forgets the external world with all its charms and attractions; even one's own body which is so dear to one, is easily forgotten. In ecstasy, when the breathing stops, the whole mind remains absolutely fixed upon the Supreme. All nerve currents run upward with tremendous force and the result is *samadhi* or Godconsciousness. Those who are mere scholars (Pandits) and have not attained Divine love, confuse the minds of others by their book-learning.

Pride

"Some people are proud of their wealth, their fame and social position, but these things are transitory. They cannot take these things with them when they depart from this world. It is not good to be proud of wealth. You may say: 'I am wealthy', but then there are millionaires, multi-millionaires, and so on. In the evening fireflies think that they are lighting the world; but when the stars begin to shine, their pride is subdued. The stars in turn think that they are lighting the world, but when the moon shines, the stars are put to shame. The moon, too, believes that her light illumines everything; but lo! the dawn appears and the rising sun effaces the light of the moon. If the wealthy people discriminate thus, then they would no longer boast of their wealth".

A HOUSEHOLDER: "Revered sir, we are householders; please give us some further instructions".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "First know God, then perform the duties of a householder".

HOUSEHOLDER: "Revered sir, is this world unreal ?"

THE WORLD UNREAL

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "So long as a man does not realize God, so long it is real ; because at that time he makes mistakes and through self-delusion says, 'me and mine'. Being fettered by this self-delusion, he drowns in the sea of lust and worldliness, and becomes so blinded by ignorance that he cannot see the way out. You yourself can notice how transitory the world is. Look at this house ; how many people have come and gone ; how many people have been born and have died in it. Now it exists, now it does not ; it is ephemeral. Those whom you call your own, will vanish when your eyes are closed. If you have no one in the household, still you are bound and cannot go anywhere because of some distant relative. The way is open, but the fish cannot escape from the net. The silkworm makes its own cocoon, but does not know how to get out and consequently dies in it".

HOW A HOUSEHOLDER SHOULD LIVE IN THE WORLD

"A householder should take care of his children, but at the same time he should think of them as baby Krishna, or as children of God. Serve your father as God, and your mother as Divine Mother. After realizing God, if a man lives with his wife, he has no physical relation with her. Then both of them can live like Bhaktas or true devotees who have no thought of sex. They talk of spiritual subjects and spend their time in thinking of God and in caring for His Bhaktas. They serve God who dwells in all beings".

HOUSEHOLDER: "But, revered sir, we do not find any such husbands and wives".

RAMAKRISHNA: "Yes, there are some, but they are very rare. Worldly people do not easily recognize them. But in order to live like this both must be spiritual. If both enjoy divine love, then such a life is possible ; otherwise there will be no harmony, but discord and trouble between husband and wife. Perhaps the wife will complain, saying: 'Why did I marry

this man ! What pleasure does he give me ? He simply sits quietly and thinks of God. He is losing his mind' ".

A DEVOTEE: "These are some of the obstacles ; but there may be others. The children may be disobedient or may be diseased. Then, revered sir, what is to be done ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "It is very difficult for a householder to practise devotion. There are many obstacles. You all know them very well,—disease, sorrow, poverty, disharmony with the wife, disobedience and evil tendencies in the children ; but there is a way out of it. One should occasionally live in solitude and pray and struggle hard to attain to God".

A HOUSEHOLDER: "Revered sir, is it necessary to leave one's home ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "Not for good ; but occasionally when you find opportunity, for a day or two, leaving behind responsibility, care and anxiety. But during this time you should not mix with worldly people or think of worldly affairs. Either live alone, or in the company of some saint or holy man".

HOUSEHOLDER: "Revered sir, how can we know or reconize a saint ?"

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A SAINT

RAMAKRISHNA: "He is a saint whose heart, soul, and inner nature have turned towards God ; he who has renounced woman and wealth. A saint does not look at women with the eye of desire ; if he comes near a woman, he sees the Divine Mother in her and worships her. His thoughts are always on God and he loves to talk about Him. He sees God everywhere and knows that by serving others, he serves Him. These are some of the outward signs of a saint".

HOUSEHOLDER: "Revered sir, is it necessary to remain long in solitude ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "Until right discrimination is acquired".

HOUSEHOLDER: "Revered sir, what is right discrimination ?"

RIGHT DISCRIMINATION

RAMAKRISHNA: "God is truth, the world is untruth, and this is discrimination. Truth means that which is unchangeable

and permanent, and untruth is that which is changeable and transitory. He who has right discrimination knows that God alone is the Reality, and all other things are unreal. When right discrimination comes, then rises intense desire to know God. As long as one loves untruth, such as the pleasures and comforts of the body, fame, honour and wealth, so long one does not desire to know God, the Truth. Right discrimination between truth and untruth leads one to search after God".

ANOTHER HOUSEHOLDER DEVOTEE: "Bhagavan, we have heard that thou hast attained to ecstasy and Godconsciousness; wilt thou please explain when and how such a state comes?"

ECSTASY

RAMAKRISHNA: "Ecstasy does not come to one who has not realized God. When a fish rises from deep water, it disturbs the surface of the water, and the larger the fish, the greater the disturbance. Therefore a person in the state of ecstasy sometimes laughs, sometimes weeps, sometimes sings, sometimes dances, but one cannot remain in that state of ecstasy for a long time".

HOUSEHOLDER DEVOTEE: "Bhagvan, we have heard that thou hast seen God. If this be true, please make us see Him also".

WORK NECESSARY FOR GOD-VISION

RAMAKRISHNA: "Everything depends upon the will of the Lord. What can man do? One may repeat his holy name, but sometimes tears flow and sometimes not. At the time of meditation, one day you may have perfect concentration and another day you will not be able to fix your mind at all. Work is necessary for God-vision. Once I was passing by a pool, the surface of which was covered by a thick scum; I saw a poor man pushing the scum to one side to look at the water. This showed me that if you wish to see the water, you must push aside the scum. That act of pushing is like the work which removes all the impurities of the heart. Then God is visible. Concentration, meditation, repetition of the name of the Lord, charitable works, and self-sacrifice,—these works will remove

the scum of ignorance which covers the water of Divinity in the pool of the heart".

MAHIMA, who had joined the group of devotees, exclaimed: "Oh yes, Bhagavan, such works are absolutely necessary. Tireless labour is needed to attain great results. How much we must study! Innumerable are the sciences, scriptures and philosophies".

RAMAKRISHNA: "How much can you study? What results can you get by mere discrimination? First try to realize God. Have faith in the words of your *Guru,* and perform some good work. If you have not found a *Guru,* a true spiritual master, earnestly pray to God. He will show you what He is like. What can you know by reading books? Before you enter a marketplace, you can hear only a loud confused uproar, but when you go near, all confusion will vanish and you will distinguish what each one is calling. Before you reach the shore, you hear the roar of the waves; but when you come near, you see vessels, sea-gulls, birds, and you can count the waves. One cannot realize Divinity by reading books".

BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND REALIZATION

"There is a vast difference between book knowledge and realization. After realization all books, sciences and scriptures seem to be like worthless straw. It is necessary first to make acquaintance with the landlord. Why are you so anxious to know beforehand how many houses, how many gardens, how many stocks and bonds he possesses? If you ask the servants, they will not tell you; nor will they notice you. But if you can once become acquainted with the landlord, by whatever means, you will learn about his possessions in a moment, and the servants then will bow down to you and honour you".

A DEVOTEE: "Bhagavan, how can one make acquaintance with the landlord?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "For that. I say, work is necessary. What is the use of sitting quietly and saying 'God exists?' If you

[1] Mahima whose full name was Mahima Charan Chakravarti was a Brahmin zemindar. He lived the life of a pure and spiritual householder and regarded Ramakrishna as the greatest Hindu sage of the age.

merely sit on the shore of a lake and say: 'There are fishes in this lake', will you catch any ? Go and get the things necessary for fishing, get a rod and line and bait and throw some lure in the water. Then from the deep water the fish will rise and come nearer, and you will be able to see and catch it. You wish me to show you God while you sit quietly by, without making the least effort. How unreasonable! You would have me set the curds, churn the butter, and hold it before your mouths. You ask me to catch the fish and place it in your hands. How unreasonable! If a man desires to see the king in his palace, he will have to go to the palace and pass through all the gates ; but if after entering the outermost gate he exclaims: 'Where is the king ?' he will not find him. He must go on through the seven gates, then he will see the king".

MAHIMA: "Bhagavan, by what kind of work can God be attained ?"

WORK AND GRACE

RAMAKRISHNA: "There is no difference in work. Do not think that this work will lead to God and that will not. Everything depends upon His grace. Whatever work you perform with sincerity and earnest longing will attract His grace and help towards realization. Through His grace the conditions for realization will become perfect. These conditions are association with the holy, right discrimination of the real from the unreal, and the finding of the real *Guru*, or the true spiritual master. In your case if your family depends upon you, perhaps your brother will assume its responsibility for you, perhaps your wife will not hinder you in your spiritual life, but will rather help you ; or perhaps you will not marry at all and will not be attached to the world in any way. When such conditions become absolutely favourable, the realization of God becomes easy".

PARABLES OF THE FATHER AND HIS DYING SON

"Once a son of a gentleman was seriously ill and was at the point of death and none could save him. Someone, however, said: 'There is but one hope. If you can get the venom of a cobra mixed with a few drops of rain-water fallen under the

constellation of *Swati* in a human skull, then you can save your son's life'. The father found in the almanac that the constellation of *Swati* would be in the ascendant on the morrow; so he prayed, saying: 'O Lord, do Thou make possible all these conditions and spare the life of my son'. With extreme earnestness and longing in his heart he set out on the following evening and searched diligently in a deserted spot for a human skull. At last he found one under a tree and watched, praying. Suddenly a shower came up and a few drops of rain lodged in the upturned skull. He said to himself: 'Now I have the water in the skull under the right constellation'. Then he prayed earnestly: 'Grant, Lord, that the rest may also come about'. In a short time he discovered a toad not far from the skull, and he prayed again. Then from the grass sprang a cobra to snatch the toad, but at that moment the toad jumped over the skull and the venom of the cobra fell into it. With overwhelming gratitude the anxious father cried out: 'Lord, by Thy grace all impossible things are possible. Now I know that my son's life will be saved'. Therefore I say, if you have true faith and earnest longing, you will get everything by the grâce of the Lord".

NON-ATTACHMENT NECESSARY

"God cannot be attained so long as the mind is not absolutely free from all worldly attachment. A true sage is one who cannot hoard anything for himself. There is a saying: 'A fowl of the air and a true sage do not hoard up and keep anything for the morrow'. As regards myself, I cannot keep anything not even a clove for my future personal needs.

"At one time I thought of going to Banaras, but afterwards I discovered that in that case I had to carry clothes and take money with me, so it was impossible for me to go. (Turning to Mahima) But you are householders, you can have both this and that, both the world and the spiritual life".

MAHIMA: "Bhagavan, 'this' cannot remain long".

RAMAKRISHNA: "When I was practising renunciation, one day I went to the Ganges near the Panchavati and took up a handful of earth and a handful of coins; then I began to dis-

criminate, saying that earth and gold (*māti* and *tākā*) are one and the same ; earth is gold and gold is earth ; and after realizing the sameness, I threw both into the river. I prayed to my Divine Mother, saying: 'O Mother, I do not desire material wealth or earthly prosperity, but only that Thou dwell within my heart'. When the mind renounces attachment to lust and wealth, it turns towards God and ultimately becomes attached to Him. Then that which was bound, becomes free. To be turned away from God is bondage. The mind is like the needle of a scale and God is the central point of balance. When the weight of worldly attachment is in the heart, the scale drops to one side and the needle of the mind is deflected from the central point or God. The heavier the weight, the greater is the deflection. Why does a child cry after its birth ? It thinks, as it were: 'I was enjoying divine communion, but now I have lost it. Where have I come and where is my God, where is my God ?' For you (to Mahima) the renunciation should be in the mind only. You should remain in the world, but unattached to it".

MAHIMA: "Revered sir, can the world exist for the mind which is fixed on God ?"

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS EVERYWHERE

RAMAKRISHNA: "Of course it will exist ; otherwise where will it go ? I see that wherever I remain, I am in the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, this world is the Kingdom of God. Ramachandra, the Divine Incarnation and the hero of the epic *Ramayana,* said to his father that he would renounce the world and go to a spiritual *Guru* in order to attain spiritual wisdom. The father summoned the great sage Vashishta to reason with his son.' Vashishta saw that Rama had intense dispassion for the world ; he then said to him: 'O Rama, first discriminate with me, then renounce the world'. By right discrimination Rama realized that God manifests Himself in the form of *jiva* or the individual soul and the world. Everything lives and exists in and through His Being. Then Rama kept silent.

"Some time ago Vaishnava Charan said that perfect knowledge of God is attained when one perceives Him in all human

beings. I have now come to a stage of realization in which I see that God is walking in every human form and manifesting Himself alike through the sage and the sinner, the virtuous and the vicious. Therefore, when I meet different people, I say to myself: 'God in the form of the saint, God in the form of the sinner, God in the form of the unrighteous and God in the form of the righteous'. He who has attained to such realization goes beyond good and evil, above virtue and vice, and realize that the divine will is working everything".

Parable of the Monk and the Zemindar

"There was a Hindu monastery in a certain village. The monks of the monastery went out every day with begging bowls to gather food. One day, a monk, passing by, saw a zemindar severely beating a poor man. The holy man, being very kind-hearted, entreated the zemindar to stop beating the man. The zemindar, blind with rage, immediately turned on the monk and began to beat him until he was knocked unconscious on the ground. Another man, seeing his condition, went to the monastery and told what had happened. His brother monks ran to the spot where the holy man was lying. They lifted him and brought him to the monastery and laid him in a room; but the holy man still remained unconscious for a long time. Sorrowful and anxious, his brothers fanned him, bathed his face, put milk into his mouth and tried to nurse him back to life. Gradually they brought him back to consciousness. The holy man opened his eyes and looked at his fellow-brethren. One of them, desiring to know whether he could recognize his friends, asked him in a loud voice: 'Maharaj, dost thou recognize him who is feeding thee with milk?' The holy man answered in a feeble voice: 'Brother, he who beat me is now feeding me'.

"But I say. one cannot realize this oneness of the spirit unless one has reached Godconsciousness".

Resignation

"Live in the world like a dead leaf. As a dead leaf is carried by the wind into a house or on the roadside and has no

choice of its own, so let the wind of Divine will blow you wherever it chooses. Now it has placed you in the world, be contented. Again when it will carry you to a better place, be equally resigned. The Lord has kept you in the world, what can you do? Resign everything to Him, even your own dear self; then all trouble will be over. You will see then that He is doing everything; everywhere is the will of Rama[2] (God).

Parable of the Pious Weaver

"In a certain village there lived a weaver. He was very spiritual; everyone trusted and loved him. The weaver went to the market to sell his cloth. If a customer asked the price of it, he would say: 'By the will of Rama the thread costs one rupee, by the will of Rama the labour costs four annas, by the will of Rama the profit is two annas, by the will of Rama the price of the cloth as it stands is one rupee and six annas'. People had such confidence in him that they would immediately pay the price and take the cloth. This man was a true devotee. At night after dinner he would sit for a long time and meditate on God and repeat His holy name. Once it was late into the night; he could not sleep; he was sitting alone in the courtyard near the entrance, smoking. A gang of robbers was passing that way. They wanted a carrier, and seeing this man, they dragged him away with them. Then they broke into a house and stole a great many things, some of which they piled on the poor weaver's head. At this moment the watchman came up, the robbers ran away and the poor weaver with his load was caught. He had to spend that night in confinement. Next morning he was brought before the judge. The people of the village, hearing what had happened, came to see the weaver. They unanimously declared: 'My lord. this man has not stolen anything'. The judge then asked the weaver to describe what had occurred. The weaver said: 'My lord, by the will of Rama, I was sitting in my courtyard; by the will of Rama it was very late in the night; I, by the will of Rama,

[2] The word Rama refers to the Divine hero described in the Hindu epic called the *Ramayana*. It is also a name which the Hindu Bhaktas use for the supreme Lord of the universe.

was meditating upon God and repeating His holy name ; when, by the will of Rama, a band of robbers passed that way ; by the will of Rama they dragged me away with them ; by the will of Rama they broke into a house ; by the will of Rama they piled a load on my head ; when, by the will of Rama, the watchman came up and by the will of Rama, I was caught. Then, by the will of Rama, I was kept in a prison, and this morning the will of Rama has brought me before thee'. The judge, seeing the innocence and spirituality of the man, ordered him to be released. Coming out, the weaver said to his friends: 'The will of Rama has released me'. Whether you live in the world or renounce it, everything depends upon the will of Rama. Throwing your whole responsibility upon God, do your work in the world. If you cannot do this, what else can you do ?"

Everything depends on God's Will

"If a clerk be imprisoned, when the term of his sentence is over and he comes out, tell me, will he pass his time in dancing for joy over his release or resume his work as clerk ? So when the householder is liberated from the prison of the world, will he spend his life in rejoicing over his liberation ? He may continue to perform his duties as householder, if he so desires. He who has attained wisdom makes no distinction between this place and that place ; to him all places are equal. He who has found God here has also found Him there. When the tail of a tadpole drops off, it can live both in water and on land. When the tail of ignorance drops off, man becomes free. He can then live both in God and in the world equally well".

The world like a dream

"Those who follow monistic (Advaita) Vedanta, however, look upon this world as unreal, like a dream. According to them, the *Paramatman,* or the Over-Soul, is the witness of the three states of consciousness,—waking, dream and dreamless sleep (*jagrat, svapna, sushapti*). All these are ideas. The dream state is just as real as the waking state. Let me tell you a story".

Parable of the Farmer and His only Child

"There was a farmer who was a monist; he had attained to some realization. He lived like any other farmer with his family, and he had a child. He and his wife had extreme love for this son, because he was their only child. The farmer himself was a very spiritual man. He was respected and loved by everyone in the village. Once he was working in the field, when suddenly a man brought the news of his son's severe illness. He went home, called physicians, took great care, but could not save the child's life. Everybody in the household was overwhelmed with grief, but the farmer looked as if nothing had happened. He consoled others by saying: 'What can be gained by mourning over the child?' The next day he went to the field as usual, and after finishing his work he came home and found his wife and the other members of the family still weeping and wailing and plunged in deep sorrow. The wife reproached him, saying: 'How heartless you are! You have not shed a single drop of tear for your only child'. The farmer then calmly replied: 'Shall I tell you why I do not weep? Last night I had a wonderful dream. I saw that I was a king and the father of eight beautiful children, and that I was enjoying all the pleasures and comforts of life. Suddenly I woke up and the dream passed away. Now I am in great confusion,—whether I shall weep and wail for my eight children or for this only one'. The farmer was an Advaita *Jnani,* therefore he realized that the waking state was as unreal as the dream state, and that the one permanent reality was the *Atman.* But I accept all states as true,—the state of samadhi, which is the fourth state, and again, the waking, dream and dreamless sleep. I accept Brahman, the Absolute and *maya, jiva* (the individual soul) and the world. If I do not take all, a portion will be missing and the weight will be less".

The Absolute and the Phenomenal

A devotee: "How could the weight be less?"

Ramakrishna: "Brahman, the Absolute, is with the individual souls and the phenomenal world. First, when a person is discriminating by saying, 'not this, not this' (*neti nesti*), he leaves the individual ego and the phenomenal world aside;

then after reaching the Absolute when he returns, he realizes that the Absolute appears as the phenomenal world. In a wood-apple (*Bael* fruit) there are seeds, pulp and the shell. When I take the pulp, I leave out the seeds and the shell, but when I speak of the weight of the wood-apple, the weight of the pulp alone would not be equal to it. You will have to weigh the pulp, seeds, shell and everything. That which has pulp, has also seeds and shell. Similarly, that which is the Absolute, has also all phenomena. Therefore I take both the absolute Reality and the phenomenal reality. I do not discard away the phenomenal world by calling it a dream, because then the weight will be less".

MAHIMA: "This is a wonderful harmony harmony from the Absolute to the phenomenal and from the phenomenal to the Absolute".

RAMAKRISHNA: "Those who are *Jnanis* (monists), look at the world as a dream (*svapna*), but the realistic Bhaktas take every state as real. There are some cows who pick only certain tufts of grass and give very little milk; but there are other cows who eat all kinds of grass and give plenty of milk. The *Jnanis* may be compared to the former, and the *Bhaktas* to the latter. The highest of the Bhaktas take both the Absolute and the phenomenal. Therefore, when they come down from the Absolute to the plane of relativity, they continue to enjoy the Absolute through the phenomenal".

RAMAKRISHNA: (to Mahima) "Do you explain *Om* as containing three letters, *A-U M*".

MAHIMA: "Yes revered sir, *A-U-M* means creation, preservation and destruction".

MEANING OF OM

RAMAKRISHNA: "But for me it is like the sound d-o-n-g of a big bell, which is at first audible, then inaudible, and ultimately melts away into infinite space. So the phenomenal melts away in the Absolute; the gross, subtle and causal states lose themselves in the great Cause, the Absolute; the waking, dream and dreamless sleep states become merged in the fourth state, *samadhi* (or *turiya*). When the bell sounds, it creates waves like those in the ocean when a heavy stone is thrown

into it. The phenomena of the universe like the gross, subtle and causal states appear to come out and go back to the Absolute. From the same Absolute, again, which is the fourth state, come the other three states of consciousness. The waves of the ocean are once more dissolved in the ocean. By this illustration of d-o-n-g I explain that the eternal word *OM* is symbolic of the evolution and involution of phenomena from and into the Absolute. I have seen all these things. My Divine Mother has shown me that in the Infinite Ocean of the Absolute, waves rise and again merge into it. In that infinite spiritual space, millions of planets and worlds rise and are dssolved. I do not know what is written in your books; I have seen all these".

MAHIMA: "Those who had realized, did not write the books. They were intoxicated by their own realization. They forgot everything, how could they write? To write something is to have a calculating intellect. Others having learned from them, have written down and their writings are known as scriptures".

WHEN GOD IS ATTAINED WORLDLY ATTACHMENT VANISHES

RAMAKRISHNA: "Worldly people say that it is impossible to be free from attachment to the world. But when God is realized, all worldly attachment vanishes. After realizing the absolute Bliss of Godconsciousness one cannot enjoy sense-pleasures or run after fame, honour or any worldly object. Moths after once seeing the light do not return to the darkness, The deeper the meditation on God the less becomes the attachment to the sense-pleasures. As one's love and devotion for God increase conversely will deminish worldly desires and care for the body. Then one will look upon every woman as mother, upon his own wife as a spiritual helpmate; all animal passions will disappear; divine qualities will manifest. Then one will become absolutely emancipated even in this life".

CHAPTER IV

VISIT TO THE PANDIT VIDYASAGARA

Sri Ramakrishna desired to meet Pandit Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara[1] One afternoon he was seen coming in a carriage with some of his disciples all the way from Dakshineswara, a distance of about six miles, to pay a visit to the Pandit at Badurbagan in Calcutta. As the carriage passed before Raja Rammohun Roy's[2] house, the Bhagavan suddenly grew silent, his mind was absorbed in meditation on the Divine Mother. One of his disciples, not perceiving the sudden change that had come over him, said: 'This is Rammohan Roy's house'. The Bhagavan replied: 'Ah ! Now my mind is not on such things'; and immediately he entered into the ecstatic state *(bhava)*'.

RAMKRISHNA'S CHILDLIKE NATURE

The carriage, a short while after, drew up in front of the Pandit's house. Sri Ramakrishna alighted, supported by one of his disciples. Before reaching the staircase which led to the Pandit's study, which was also the drawing-room, the Bhagavan, putting his hand on his shirt, asked a disciple with some concern: "My shirt is unbuttoned; is it necessary to button it ?" The disciple answered: "Do not trouble thyself, Lord; none

[1] Pandit Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara was the greatest Hindu scholar of his time in Calcutta. He was a true philanthropist, a patriot, and educationist, and the founder of the Metropolitan Institution (present Vidyasagara College) in Calcutta. The word Vidyasagara is a Sanskrit title which he acquired on account of his erudition. It means 'ocean of knowledge'.

[2] Raja Rammohan Roy was a great Hindu reformer who lived between 1774 and 1833 A.D. He was the first earnest-minded investigator of the philosophy of comparative religion in India. He studied the Vedas in Sanskrit and the Buddhist scriptures in the original Pali, the Koran in Arabic, the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. He denounced the practice of *Suttee* which was abolished in 1829. He established the Hindu Unitarian Theistic movement known as the "Brahmo Samaj." He was the first Hindu Brahmin of rank and influence who visited Paris and England. After nearly two years' stay in England Raja Rammohun Roy died in Bristol in 1833.

will find fault with thee on that account". The Bhagavan. like a child, seemed to be satisfied and did not think about it again. The party was then led upstairs into a room where the Pandit was seated in a chair facing the south. A table after the European fashion, with books and papers lying about on it, was before him, and he was talking with some of his friends. As the Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna entered the room, the Pandit rose to receive him. The Lord stood with his face to the west and with one hand resting upon the table. He looked upon the Pandit intently as if he was an old acquaintance, and with a smile on his sweet, childlike radiant face, lost all sense-consciousness, and went into the ecstatic *samadhi*.

After a while, taking his seat on a bench, the Bhagavan in his semiconscious state uttered: "I wish some water to drink". Thereupon Vidyasagara inquired of a disciple whether the Bhagavan would also like some delicious sweetmeats which he had just received from Burdwan.[3] Finding no objectiion, the Pandit went into his inner apartments and returned with water and the sweetmeats. He placed them before the Lord. The disciples partook of the sweetmeats, but when they were going to offer some of them to one young man, Vidyasagara said: "Oh, he is a child of this house; do not trouble about him".

THE BHAGAVAN then said, referring to a young man who was sitting before him: "Yes, this young man is good. He is like the river Falgu,[4] covered with dry sand, but if you dig a little you will find a strong invisible current underneath. He has a spiritual current inside, although he does not show it on the outside".

RAMAKRISHNA'S LOVE OF HUMOUR

Then addressing Vidyasagara he continued: "Today I have at last reached the ocean (referring to the literal meaning of the word Vidyasagara—the ocean of knowledge). So long I

[3] Burdwan, an old city in Bengal, famous for delicious sweetmeats (Sitabhoga etc.).

[4] Falgu is the name of a sacred river near the holy city of Gaya in India. It was on the bank of this river that Buddha attained to the highest enlightenment. Its bed is covered with sand like a desert, but a strong current of pure water flows underneath.

have seen only canals, lakes, or, at most, rivers, but now I see the ocean itself".

VIDYASAGARA: "Then, sir, thou art welcome to take some salt water from it".

BHAGAVAN: "No, my dear sir, why salt water? You are not the ocean of *avidya* (ignorance), which leads away from God, but you are the ocean of milk, the ocean of *vidya,* or true knowledge leading Godward".

VIDYASAGARA: "Revered sir, thou mayest say that".

GOOD WORKS AND COMPASSION FOR ALL

BHAGAVAN: "Your *karma* proceeds from the *sattva* element of nature. From it rises compassion. Whatever work is done for the good of others is absolutely free from fault. It may be called *rajasika,* but it is the activity of *sattva.* There is no harm in such works. Sukadeva and others like him had compassion for all. They worked for humanity and helped mankind in the path of Divinity. You are giving free education and doing charitable works; that is good. He who performs good works through love, without seeking results, attains to God. But he who works for name, fame or any other selfish purpose, remains bound. Further, I may say that you have already become Siddha (perfected)".

VIDYASAGARA: "Sir, how is that?"

BHAGAVAN: "You know that *siddha,* or well-boiled potato, becomes soft and tender. Have you not become tender-hearted by your compassion for all?"

VIDYASAGARA: "But the paste of *kalai* (a kind of pulse) when boiled (*siddha*) becomes harder. Is it not so?"

BOOK-LEARNED PANDITS LIKE VULTURES

BHAGAVAN, laughing: "Yes, but you are not like that. Mere book-learned Pandits (scholars) are hard-hearted. They do good neither to themselves nor to others. They are like vultures who soar high in the sky, but always search after carrion-pits. They may talk about Divine Truths, but their minds are attached to woman and wealth. Their attachment is to worldly things (*avidya*). Compassion, devotion (*bhakti*), dispassion (*vairagya*)—these are the manifestations of *vidya*".

Vidyasagara was listening to the words of wisdom with whole attention, while the eyes of other gentlemen present were fixed upon the blissful face of Ramakrishna radiant with Divine glory.

Vidya and Avidya

The Bhagavan continued: "The absolute Brahman is beyond the reach of *vidya* (knowledge) as well as of *avidya* (ignorance), which keeps one away from the realization of the Absolute.

"The absolute Brahman is beyond the reach of *maya,* while *maya* is either *vidya* or *avidya, vidya-maya* and *avidya-maya* both exist in this world. As there are knowledge (*jnana*) and devotion (*bhakti*), so also there are lust and greed for wealth. Good and evil, virtue and vice, are to be found in this world of relativity; but Brahman is unaffected by them. They exist in relation to *Jiva* (individual ego), but cannot touch the Absolute Brahman".

The Brahman Untouched by Good and Evil

"The Brahman may be compared to the light of a lamp. As by the same light one may read the holy scriptures and another may forge a document, while the light remains unaffected by the good and evil deeds, so is the Absolute Brahman untouched by the good and evil of the world. He is like the sun who shines equally upon the virtuous and the wicked".

Brahman Indescribable

"If you ask, misery, sin, suffering, unhappiness,—whose are these? I should answer, they are for the ego (*Jivatman*). They do not affect the Brahman. Evil to *Jiva* is not evil to the Brahman any more than the venom in the fangs of a snake is poison to the snake. Others may die of snake-bite, but as the poison does not hurt the snake, so indeed is the existence of sin and evil in relation to *Jiva* alone. Who can describe what the Absolute Brahman is? Whatever can be uttered by the mouth

has become defiled as it were, like the remains of food left in the dishes after eating. The revealed scriptures, Vedas, Tantras, Puranas and all holy books, have become as it were defiled, for they have been uttered by human mouths. But there is one thing that is never defiled in this manner and that is the Absolute Brahman. No one has ever succeeded in describing the Absolute by words. The Brahman is unspeakable, indescribable, unthinkable".

VIDYASAGARA, interrupting, said to his friends: "This is a grand idea. Today I have learned this truth that the Brahman is the one Substance that has never been defiled by the mouth".

BHAGAVAN: "Yes, that is so".

PARABLE OF THE VEDIC FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS

"A certain father had two sons. To instruct them in the knowledge of the Brahman he sent them to an Acharya (preceptor). After a few years they returned home and saluted their father. The father was anxious to know how far they had learned about Brahman, so he asked his eldest son: 'My dear son, you have studied all the scriptures and philosophies, tell me what is the Brahman like.' The eldest son then tried to describe the Absolute Brahman by quoting various passages from the Vedas. The father kept silent.

"Turning to his younger son he asked the same question. The younger son did not answer in words, but remained motionless and communed with the Brahman in silence. The father then exclaimed: 'My dear child, thou art on the way to the realization of the Brahman. Thy silence is a better answer than the recitation of a hundred texts of the Vedas, for the Brahman is indescribable by words. It is indeed the Absolute Silence'. The knowledge of the Absolute Brahman is attained in the state of *samadhi*. In the superconscious state, the Brahman is realized. Then all thoughts cease to rise and perfect silence prevails in the soul. Even the power of speech remains unmanifested. 'How can one describe the Brahman by words of mouth ? Man thinks that he has known the Absolute Brahman".

PARABLE OF THE ANT AND THE MOUNT OF SUGAR

"An ant went to a mount of sugar. The ant did not realize how high was the mountain, but ate a small particle of sugar

and was satisfied. It carried home another particle in its mouth. On its way it thought: 'Next time I will carry the whole mountain'. Such, alas, is the thought of small minds. They think that they have known the Absolute, not realizing that the Brahman is beyond the reach of mind and thought. However high the mind may rise it cannot fully comprehend the Absolute Brahman. Sukadeva[5] and other great spiritual teachers may be compared to large ants. They could carry in their mouths at utmost eight or ten grains from the mountain of sugar. It is as absurd to say that the Brahman has been fully comprehended by a great man as it is absurd to say that the whole mountain of sugar was carried away by a large ant.

"What the Vedas and other scriptures have said about the Absolute is like the description of the ocean given by a man who saw the vast ocean. When asked what the ocean was like, he exclaimed in utter amazement: 'Oh! what I have seen; how vast is the expanse! How big are the waves! What a thundering roar!'

"Like unto this is the talk about the Absolute Brahman. The Vedas declare that the Brahman is the ocean of the Absolute Existence, Intelligence and Bliss. Sukadeva and other great spiritual teachers stood on the shore of that Infinite Ocean, saw it and touched its water.

"Some believe that even those great souls did not go into the ocean, for whoever enters into that ocean of the Brahman does not return to this mundane existence".

Parable of a Salt Doll

"A doll made of salt once went to the ocean to measure its depth. It had a desire to tell others how deep was the ocean. Alas, its desire was never satisfied. No sooner had it plunged into the ocean than it melted away and became one with the ocean. Who would bring the news regarding the depth? Similar is the condition of the *Jiva* (individual ego) who enters into the infinite ocean of the Absolute Brahman".

[5] Sukadeva was the son of Vyasa, the author of the *Vedantasutras* and many of the *Puranas*. He was born with the *Brahmajnana* or the knowledge of the Absolute. He, in his childhood, renounced the world with all its pleasures and attractions. He is regarded by the Hindus as the ideal Jnani, or knower of the Brahman.

Someone asked: "Bhagavan, is it true that the man who has entered into *samadhi* or who has acquired *Brahmajnana* does not speak ?"

The Brahman is Silence

Ramakrishna to Vidyasagara: "Yes, he who has realized the Brahman becomes silent. Discussions and argumentations exist so long as the realization of the Absolute does not come. If you melt butter in a pan over fire, how long does it make a noise ? So long as there is water in it. When the water is evaporated it ceases to make further noise. Again if you throw a piece of dough in that hot clarified butter (*ghee*) there will be noise until the cake is thoroughly fried. The soul of a seeker after the Brahman may be compared to fresh butter. It is mixed with the water of egoism and worldliness. Discussions and argumentations (*vichara*) of a seeker are like the noise caused during the process of purification by the fire of knowledge. As the water of egoism and worldliness is evaporated and the soul becomes purer, all noise of debates and discussions ceases and absolute silence reign in the state of *samadhi*".

Egoism of a Saint

"Thus realizing the Absolute Brahman in silence, the soul comes down on the plane of relativity to help others and to teach mankind the highest wisdom of the Brahman. Then he talks again and makes a noise again, as the hot ghee does when in contact with a piece of dough. Such a soul retains the sense of 'I' simply to help mankind. Sankaracharya and other spiritual teachers kept the purified sense of 'I' without which all teaching is impossible".

Sages Teach for the Good of Others

"The bee buzzes so long as it is outside the lotus and does not settle down in its heart to drink the honey. As soon as it tastes the honey all buzzing stops. Similarly all noise of discussion ceases when the soul of the neophyte begins to drink the nectar of divine love in the lotus feet of the Almighty. Some-

times, however, the bee after being intoxicated by the honey makes a sweet humming sound. So the God-intoxicated soul sometimes speaks for the good of others.

"A pitcher makes a noise when it is being filled with water in a tank. But all noise stops as soon as the pitcher is full to the brim. The noise will be heard again if some water of the pitcher be poured into another pitcher. (Here water means the water of the divine wisdom, and the soul of a wise man and that of a neophyte are the pitchers)".

Relation between Guru and Disciples

"The question now arises, how we do explain the relation between a perfect *Guru* and his disciples. The *Guru* must talk in order to drive away the ignorance of his disciples. This kind of discrimination, however, does no harm. The boiling butter after it is clarified ceases to make any noise; but if the raw cake made of flour is thrown into it, it will produce much noise because of the water in the cake. The noise will continue until the cake is properly fried. The unfried may be compared to the disciple, and the boiling butter to the *Guru,* the spiritual teacher. The sound of teaching is heard so long as the disciple is not perfectly enlightened".

Non-Attachment

Sri Ramakrishna continued: "So long as the individual soul has the slightest attachment to the world of senses and desires it cannot attain to *Brahmajnana.* He is a Jnani who relinquishes all worldly desires and sense-pleasures by saying, 'Not this, not this' (*neti neti*) and then realizes the Supreme Brahman in *samadhi.*

"A Jnani knows that all phenomena of the universe which are subject to evolution, whether physical or mental, are within the realm of *maya*; they are unreal and transitory like the objects of vision in a dream. Therefore as one climbs the stairway step by step until the roof is reached, so he rises above them step by step, saying 'not this, not this' until he reaches the Absolute Brahman, which is the roof of the phenomenal universe".

All Phenomena Unreal

"A Jnani goes so far as to realize that the Brahman is the Absolute Reality and all phenomena unreal. A Vijnani, however, goes farther and realizes more. He sees that the roof and the steps are all made of the same substance. Few can stay long on the roof (the realm of the Absolute). All those who reach this state of *samadhi* must return to lower planes, just as no one can sing on 'Ni', (*nishada* of Indian music), the highest note of the gamut, for a long time. The sense of 'I' (*aham*) drags one down. But when a Vijnani returns from *samadhi* to a lower plane of consciousness and perceives the world of relativity, he sees the Brahman everywhere, and that the same Absolute Being appears as *Jiva* and all the phenomena of the universe. He realizes, 'I am the Brahman', 'I am He' ".

Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

"There are various paths which lead to the realization of the Absolute Brahman. The path of a Jnani is as good as that of a Bhakta. Jnana Yoga is true; so is Bhakti Yoga. There is another path of *bhakti* mixed with *jnana* which is equally true. So long and as the sense of 'I, me, and mine' remains in the devotee, the path of *bhakti* is easier for him.

"A Vijnani, however, realizes the Absolute Brahman as the unchangeable Reality of the universe, firm and immutable like the Mount Sumeru. It is beyond all activity of *maya*. He also sees that the world has evolved out of the three *gunas* (*sattva, rajas* and *tamas*) of the *Prakriti* or cosmic energy".

Maya

"*Maya* or *Prakriti* consists of *vidya* and *avidya*. *Vidya* is that energy which leads Godward. It manifests itself as discrimination (*viveka*), non-attachment (*vairagya*), devotion and love of God (*bhakti, prema*). But *avidya* leads to worldliness. This energy expresses itself as various passions, desires for wealth and honour, ambition, work with attachment, selfishness. All these *vidya* and *avidya* forces rise from the divine energy of the Brahman—they cannot affect the Brahman. The Vijnani

realizes that the same Absolute Brahman appears as the personal God (Isvara), that He who is beyond all attributes is also the personal God with all attributes and blessed qualities".

VIJNANI AND BHAKTA

"The Vijnani sees that *Jiva* (individual ego), phenomenal world, mind, intellect, *bhakti,* dispassion, knowledge—all these are the glory of the supreme personal Deity. If these manifestations of the divine glory did not exist, who would have worshipped Him as the Lord of the universe ? If a rich man does not possess wealth and property, but becomes bankrupt, nobody will call him rich. Do you not see how beautiful is this world ? How many varieties of phenomena—the sun, moon and stars various kinds of animals and vegetables, things large and small, good and bad, some men with great powers, others with few—are there to manifest His glory".

VIDYASAGARA: "Is it then true, revered sir, that God has given some one greater powers than others ? Is the Lord partial ?"

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

BHAGAGAN: "The Lord dwells as the all-pervading Being (*vibhu*) equally within all living creatures great or small, nay, even in the smallest ant or animalcule. The difference lies in the manifestation of powers (Sakti); otherwise how will it be possible for one strong man to defeat ten men in a hand-to-hand fight, while a weakling will run away from the presence of an ordinary mortal ?

"If there were no difference in powers, why should people respect and honour you ? You have not got two horns on your forehead like a monster so that people will come to see you out of curiosity. You have more compassion, more wisdom than others, therefore people come to see you and pay respect to you. Do you not think so ?

"There is nothing in mere book-learning. One should study books simply to find out the ways by which He (the Absolute Brahman) can be realized".

Book-Learning

"A holy man had a manuscript with him. Some one asked what it contained. The saint opened it and showed that on every page was written the sacred formula 'Om Rama', the holy name of the Lord".

True Meaning of Gita

"Take the sacred book, the *Bhagavad Gita*. What does it teach ? If you wish to know it repeat the name *Gita* ten times in quick succession—*'gi-ta, gi-ta, gi-,'* etc. It will sound like *'tagi'* (*tyagi*), *'tagi'* (*tyagi*) which has the same meaning as the Sanskrit word *'Tyagi'*, that is, one who has renounied everything of the world for the sake of the Lord. One truth which the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches is this: 'O *jiva*, giving up attachment to objects and pleasures of the world struggle to realize God'. The mind of a man (whether a saint or a householder) must be free from all attachment to the world. Then and then alone the heart will be purified and the Absolute will be realized.

"Chaitanya Deva (God-incarnate of Nadia), when travelling on a pilgrimage in the Deccan (Southern India), saw in one place a man reading aloud the texts of the *Bhagabad Gita*. At a little distance another man, with unrestrainable tears running down his cheeks, was listening. Chaitanya Deva asked him whether he understood the meaning of the text. The poor man replied: 'My Lord, I do not understand one word of what the Pandit is reading'. Chaitanya Deva questioned him: 'Why are you weeping, then ?' The devotee answered: 'I see the chariot of Arjuna, and the blessed Lord Krishna is speaking before him. This Divine vision brings tears of love to my eyes".

Nirvikalpa Samadhi

Sri Rmakrishna continued: "You may ask why does a Vijnani prefer to have *bhakti* (love and devotion). The answer is: Because it is difficult for one to be free from the

sense of 'I'. In the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*,[2] it may vanish for the time being, but it comes back again ; while for ordinary individuals it is almost impossible to eliminate this sense of 'I, me and mine'. However, many times you may cut off the branches of the Asvatthva tree, so long as the root is alive, new branches will sprout ; similarly you may try to get rid the sense of 'I', but so long as the root is alive it will sprout up again and again. Even after acquiring the *Brahmajnana,* the emancipated soul is forced back to the plane of this *'aham'*, the sense of 'I'.

"If you dream of a tiger you will tremble in every limb and your heart will throb violently. When you wake up you may realize that it was a mere dream, but still your heart will go on palpitating for a long time. Similarly the sense of 'I' remains even after the realization of the Absolute.

"Thus, if the sense of 'I' is the cause of all troubles and it is impossible to be free from it, let it stay on as 'I', the servant of the Lord.

"Ramachandra (the God-Incarnate) once asked his great devotee Hanumana: 'My child, in what relation do you regard me ?' The devotee replied: 'When I think of myself as one with gross body, I am thy servant and thou art the Lord. When I think of myself as the *Jiva* (ego), I am thy part and thou art the universal Whole ; but when I think of myself as the *Atman,* I am one with thee. Then I realize 'I am thou and thou art I'.

"If the sense of 'I' clings to one so persistently, let it remain like that of a true Bhakta who thinks of himself as the servant of the Lord".

Ajnana and Jnana

'I' and 'mine'—these two are the signs of *ajnana* (ignorance). My house, my wealth, my learning, my glory, all these are mine —this idea proceeds from ignorance of one's true Self, but *jnana* or divine knowledge means that state where *jiva* realizes: 'O Lord, Thou art the Master of all ; house, family, children, friends, relatives, nay, whatever exists in the universe belongs

[2] *Nirvikalpa samadhi* is described in the Raja Yoga as the highest state of *samadhi* in which the soul rises above the sense of 'I' and the plane of all thoughts, ideas and emotions, and reaches the realm of the Absolute.

to Thee'. 'Whatever is mine is Thine'. 'Nothing belongs to me'—such ideas rise from true knowledge.

"It is good for everyone to remember that after death nothing of this world will remain with us. We have come here simply to perform certain *karma* and gain some experience. Just as country people come to a big city like Calcutta to do some work, so we have come to fulfil our desires according to the tendencies with which we were born".

Parable of the Rich Man and His Sircar

"A rich man has given the charge of his beautiful garden to his *Sircar* (steward). When visitors come to see the garden the *Sircar* waits on them attentively. He shows them the beautiful parts of the garden with luxurious fruit-trees, flower-beds. palace-like buildings, lakes, etc., saying: 'These are, gentlemen, our mango-trees. This is our orchard; this is our lake; how beautiful are our flowers! Here you see is our drawing-room with most expensive furniture, fine paintings by the best artists—all these belong to us'. The same *Sircar* may be found fault with and dismissed by his master at any time with peremptory order to leave the garden at once. He will not be allowed sufficient time to pack up his trunk and take his own baggage with him. Such is the miserable plight of those who lay claim upon things whch do not in reality belong to them.

"Everything belongs to the Lord. It is ridiculous for man to say, 'I am *karta*' (the doer), 'All these things are mine' ".

The Lord Smiles on Two Occasions

"On two occasions the Lord cannot help smiling: A person is taken seriously ill and is about to die. The physician says to the mother of the patient: 'Mother, there is no cause for fear. I shall save your son's life'. The physician forgets that the will of the Lord is at the root of every event of life and death. The Lord then smiles, thinking: 'How foolish this man must be who boasts of saving the life of his patient when the latter is bound to die at My will'. The Lord smiles again when two brothers are engaged in partitioning their

estate. They take a measuring-tape and, putting it out across the land, say: 'This portion is mine, and that is yours'. The Lord smiles, thinking: 'The whole universe belongs to Me, but these foolish brothers say: 'This portion is mine and that is yours'.

"O Lord, Thou makest everything and Thou art my nearest and dearest One. This house, this family, these relatives, these friends of mine, nay, this whole universe belong to Thee, O Lord'. Such is the nature of true *jnana* (knowledge). But 'I do everything, I am the doer. My house, my family, my children, my friends, everything belongs to me'; all these proceed from *ajnana* (ignorance)".

The Lord Alone is Thine Own

"A *Guru* was giving this instruction to his disciple: 'The Lord alone is thine own and no one else belongs to thee'. The disciple replied: 'But my mother and my wife, who take such good care of me, who love me and feel extremely unhappy when they do not see me, are also my own ; are they not ? The *Guru* answered: 'In this you are mistaken. I will show you that none of them truly cares for you. Never believe for a moment that your mother or wife will sacrifice her life for your sake. You can try and see. Go home and feign excruciating pain and I will come and show you'. The disciple acted accordingly. Doctors were called in, but no one could afford relief. The mother of the patient was sorrowing and sighing. The wife and children were weeping. At this moment the Sannyasin (*Guru*) appeared. 'The disease is of a serious nature', he said, 'and I do not see any chance of the patient's recovery unless someone come forward to give his or her life for the patient'. At this all of them looked aghast. The Sannyasin, addressing the old mother of the sick man, said: 'To live or to die will be the same thing to you, if in your old age you lose your son who earns for himself and for you all. If you can give your life in exchange for his, I can save your son. If you, as mother, cannot make this sacrifice for him, who else in the world will care to do it ?' The old woman stammered through her tears: 'Revered father, I am ready to do anything you order for the sake of my son. But as regards laying down my own

life—and what is my life in comparison to that of my son? The thought—what will become of my little ones after my death, makes me a coward. Unfortunate that I am, these little ones are in my way!'

"While listening to this dialogue between the Sannyasin and her mother-in-law the wife wept bitterly and, addressing her parents, said: 'For your sake, dear father and mother, I cannot make the sacrifice'. In this way everyone found an excuse. Then the Sannyasin turned to the patient and said: 'Do you see, no one here is ready to sacrifice one's life for you. Do you understand now what I meant by saying that there was no depending on anybody?' When the disciple saw all this, he abandoned his so-called home and followed the Sannyasin, his *Guru*".

Self-surrender and Prayer

Sri Ramakrishna continued: "The Absolute Brahman cannot be known by reasoning. Be his servant, and taking refuge with Him pray to Him with earnestness and sincerity. He will surely reveal Himself unto you. Book-learning or intellectual discussions cannot reveal the Divinity".

Thus saying the blessed Master sang:

The Glory of the Divine Mother.

1. Who knows what is Kali (my Divine Mother)?
   Even the six schools of philosophy get not a glimpse of Her.

2. The Yogi ever meditates upon Her at the *muladhara* and the *sahasrara*.

   As the swans, male and female, commune with each other, so in this lotus (lotus here is a symbol of plexus) forest does Kali commune with Her consort (Siva).

3. Kali, the soul of Atmarama (Siva) is as beloved as Sita is of Rama. Siva (Kala) alone can know the majesty of Kali—truly who else can know it?

4. For She gives birth to the universe; think how vast She is. She dwells within all things as the will of the omnipotent.

Prasad[1] sings: Mortals may laugh at the thought of swimming across the mighty ocean, and this my mind perceives, but my heart enfolds it not; yet being small like a dwarf it still aspires to touch the moon".

The blessed master, referring to this song, said: "See how Ramaprasad describes that books and reasoning cannot reveal the divine Mother. Faith is necessary.

The Omnipotence of Faith

"Reason is weak. Faith is omnipotent. Reason cannot go far enough and must stop short of the goal. Faith will work wonders.

Parable of a Brahmin Priest and His Boy

"There was a certain Brahmin priest who served in a household chapel. Once he went away leaving the charge of his service to his son. He told the boy to place the daily offering of food before the Deity and see that He ate it. The boy, following the instructions of his father, placed the offering before the image and silently waited. But the image neither spoke nor ate. The boy watched for a long time. He had firm faith that the Deity would come down from the alter, take the seat before the offering and eat it. Then he prayed: 'O Lord, come and eat. It is getting very late; I cannot wait any longer'. But the Lord did not speak. Then the boy began to cry, saying: 'My father told me to see that the Lord ate the offering. Why dost Thou not come to me? Thou didst come to my father and eat the offering. What have I done that Thou dost not come'. He cried bitterly and for a long time. Then as he looked up at the seat, he saw the Deity in a human form eating the offering. When the service was ended and the boy came out, the members of the household said to him, 'If the service is over, bring out the offering'. The boy replied: 'Yes, but the Lord has eaten everything'. In amazement they asked:

[1] Prasad is the abbreviated form of the full name of the Hindu psalmist, Ramaprasad Sen. He was a great Yogi and a true devotee of the Divine Mother of the universe. His songs have deep spiritual meaning and Ramakrishna was very fond of them.

'What did you say?' With absolute innocence the boy repeated: 'Why, the Lord has eaten all that I offered'. Then they entered the chapel and were dumbfounded at the sight of the empty dishes. Such is the power of true faith and true yearning.

"Yes, faith will enable a man to cross the mighty ocean itself without the least difficulty. In the epic *Ramayana* it is said: Ramachandra (God-Incarnate) worked hard to throw a bridge over the part of the sea separating Lanka (Ceylon) from the mainland of India. But his Bhakta, the great Hanuman,[2] jumped across the ocean unaided to prove the majesty, and the omnipotence of faith in Rama.

"It is also told that once a Bhakta, a friend of Vibhishana,[3] wanted to go across the sea. Vibhishana, to whom he appealed for help, had the name of Rama (God) written on a leaf, without the knowledge of his friend. He then said to the Bhakta: 'Take this and be careful that you have it tied to the end of your cloth. It will enable you to walk across the ocean in safety. But mind, never look inside, for you will go under the water if you open it'. The Bhakta put faith in his friend's words and walked on the ocean in safety for some time, but unfortunately his curiosity became his enemy. He wanted to see what precious thing Vibhishana had given him that had the power of taking him safely over the mighty deep. When he opened it he discovered a leaf with the name of Rama written on it. He thought what a trifling it was; no sooner did that thought arise in his mind than he was drowned.

"Those who belong to this class of *Jivas* cannot easily have faith in God, but those who are born with divine qualities possess the highest faith naturally. When Prahlada tired to write the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, 'K', it brought up before his mind the name Krishna, and he began to cry. The natural tendency of a *Jiva* is to doubt and to become

[2] Hanumana was a great devotee of Rama, who by the power of his absolute faith in the Lord, jumped across the ocean from India to Lanka. He is regarded by the Hindus as the ideal Bhakta of India.

[3] Vibhishana was the brother of Ravana, the king of Lanka (Ceylon), who was defeated by Rama, as described in the Hindu epic, *Ramayana*. He became a devoted disciple of Rama and followed his instructions as long as he lived.

sceptical. Hazra "will not believe in the truth that the Brahman and Divine Mother, the Absolute and His energy, are one and the same. Yet, faith is omnipotent. Before it all the powers of nature shrink and give way. It carries one over seas and mountains with perfect ease. Sin and iniquity, worldliness and ignorance all vanish before true faith".

The Bhagavan sang:

THE NAME OF THE LORD

1. O my Divine Mother, if I die with Thy hallowed name (Durga, Durga) on my lips.
   Then in the end, O Giver of all-bliss, I shall reckon whether Thou savest Thy poor child drowning in the ocean of sin.
2. I might have slain a cow or a Brahmin or an unborn child!
   I might be a drunkard, nay more, the slayer of a woman!
   But of all these dire sins I have not the slightest fear.
   Through faith in Thy holy name I can reach the highest bliss of Brahman.

"Yes, faith is at the root of all spiritual progress. You can do without all other things, only you must have faith. Have only faith in the Lord and you shall become at once free from all sorts of sins.

"The one thing needed is faith and *bhakti*—love, devotion, earnest prayer and self-surrender. It is exceedingly difficult, especially in this age, for a man with his limited faculties to come to my Mother through *vichara* (discrimination of the real Brahman from the unreal phenomenal universe), unaided by the Divine grace. Verily has Ramaprasad, the great Bhakta of Bengal, laid stress on this difficulty in his well-known song:

THE DIVINE MOTHER AND THE ABSOLUTE BRAHMAN

1. "Like a mad man, O mind, what dost thou seek in the dark room?

[4] Hazra was a moral householder who afterwards devoted his life in search after God. He was a Bhakta but preferred to travel along the path of *jnana*.

Divine Being comes in deep meditation; without that, who can approach Him?

2. The moon of desire still shines in thy secret chamber. First bring it under control with all thy might. It will hide itself at the dawn of Divine wisdom.
3. Holding this as the ideal, the great Yogi practises meditation for ages. When realization comes it attracts the soul as a magnet draws unto itself a piece of iron.
4. Thou shalt not find It in the six schools of philosophy, in the Vedas, Tantras or in the holy Scriptures. It loves the sweetness of true devotion (*bhakti*) and abides in the body with everlasting Bliss.

Prasad says: O mind, shall I disclose in public (*chatar*) the true nature of Her, whom I worship as my Divine Mother? Guess and understand it from these hints."

There was a deep silence at the close of this song, which had been listened to with rapt attention. Everyone was moved.

Ramakrishna's Samadhi

At the end of this song the Bhagavan was once more found to be in that indescribable state of *samadhi*. His sweet divine voice became still. His eyes remained fixed and steadfast. But his spiritual eye was feasting on the beatific vision of the Divine glory. There was left enough of self-consciousness to bring the soul face to face with the Divine Mother. This blessed vision the Bhagavan enjoyed for a long time. His face was radiant with celestial light and his sweet smiles expressed the unbounded happiness which he was enjoying within himself, and in his semiconscious state he uttered these words:

What is Bhakti?

"*Bhakti*, or devotion, means whole-hearted love for the Lord. The Absolute Brahman is called Divine Mother by Prasad who asks his mind to understand it by hints. That which is described in the Vedas as the Absolute Brahman is my Divine Mother; I am praying to Her.

Brahman Impersonal and Personal

That which is the Absolute (*nirguna*), impersonal beyond all attributes, is also the same as the personal God who is with

all attributes and blessed qualities. The Absolute Brahman again is inseparable from the Divine energy (Sakti).

"The term 'Brahman' refers to that aspect of Divinity which is impersonal and which is beyond all activity. But when we think of Him as creating, preserving and destroying all phenomena, then we call Him the personal God, Divine Mother or Kali.

Brahman and Sakti are One

"In reality, there is no distinction between the Brahman, or the impersonal Absolute, and the Sakti, the Divine Mother. The Brahman and the Sakti are one just as fire and its burning power are one. As by the word fire we understand its power of burning, so by the latter we know that it is the same as fire. By realizing the one both are realized.

"They are one just as much as milk and its whiteness are one. We cannot conceive the milk without its whiteness.

"They are one just as a gem and its lustre are one. We cannot conceive a gem without its lustre.

"They are one just as the serpent and its sinuous motion are one. We cannot conceive of the serpent without the serpentine movements.

"He who knows what light is, has the knowledge of darkness also. He who has the conception of the phenomenal world must have also some conception of the Absolute Noumenon. He who knows the Sakti, or the personal aspect of the Absolute Being, knows also the impersonal Brahman. Again he who has realized the Absolute Noumenon has also realized the phenomenon. He who has realized Brahman has also realized the personal God or Divine Mother (Sakti).

The Power of The Divine Mother

"This Divine Mother bestows the highest knowledge of the Brahman (*Brahmajnana*) by bringing Her devotee into the state of *samadhi*. She brings him down on the plane of sense-consciousness and allows him to retain the sense of 'I' and 'me'.

"By the power of my Divine Mother all mortals (*jiva*) possess the senses of 'I' and 'mine'. She again reveals to the

soul of one who is in *samadhi,* that all living beings, nay, the whole universe, are but the manifestation of the Divine Energy.

"It is She who makes one reach the *Brahmajnana,* the highest knowledge of the Absolute, and She again makes another Her beloved devotee who surrenders himself to Her omnipotent will. This truth is the great secret of all secrets. Therefore Prasad says: 'Shall I disclose it in the *chatar* ?' "

Vidyasagara asked his friend who was sitting nearby: "Do you understand the meaning of *chatar*?" The friend replied: "I know that *'chatar'* means a courtyard within a house".

VIDYASAGARA: "Exactly. It may also mean a public market-place. So Ramaprasad does not want to divulge this secret in public".

The Bhagavan with his smiling face spoke to Vidyasagara: "Oh, you are a Pandit, a great scholar, you must know all this. When I sing the praise of my Divine Mother I refer to the same Absolute Brahman. The term 'Ma' (Mother) is very sweet. Therefore I like to call Him 'Mother'. We must learn to love the personal God (*Isvara*). Through love He can be easily attained. Love, devotion and faith are of great value but rare. Listen to another song".

The Bhagavan sang again:

LOVE FOR THE DIVINE MOTHER

1. "Ecstasy dawns when I meditate upon my Divine Mother. As is the ardour of thought so is the attainment; but perfect faith is at the root of all.
2. If the mind dives into the Ocean of Bliss at the feet of my Mother, then there is no further need of worship, rituals, sacrifice or repetition of the Lord's name.
3. The devotee of the Divine Mother is free even in this life and does enjoy everlasting bliss.

THE LORD, THE OCEAN OF IMMORTALITY

He who can dive into the ocean of Bliss becomes immortal. The Lord is described in the Vedas as the Ocean of immortal Bliss. Whosoever enters into it becomes free from death. Some people have a wrong idea that too much meditation upon the Lord will unbalance the mind. No one becomes unbalanced by meditating upon the Lord.

BHAGAVAN: "Devotional exercises, rituals, ceremonials, sacrifices or the pouring of oblations into the sacred fire—such works are needless when true love for the Lord comes in the heart of the devotee. A fan is needed so long as there is no breeze. So when the breeze of the Divine Love blows all ritualistic works become unnecessary".

SELFLESS WORKS PURIFY THE HEART
DOING GOOD TO THE WORLD

Referring to Vidyasagara, the Bhagavan continued: "The works which you are doing are good work. If you can perform them without thinking that you are the 'doer', (*karta*), then it will be still better. The highest result of works done in this selfless manner is the attainment of true love for God. Such works purify the heart and bring God-consciousness in the end. But as your love for the Lord becomes more and more intense, your religious works will become less and less. A married woman diligently performs the household duties, but she is not allowed to do any heavy work when she is heavy with child. You are doing charitable works and other works for the good of humanity. In reality, however, they are of great help to yourself. They will purify your heart and bring unselfish love for God. Man has no power to do good to the world; the Lord does everything. He who has made the sun and the moon, He who has given affection in the hearts of parents, He who has bestowed compassion upon the great souls, He who has brought unselfish love and devotion in the hearts of saints and sages, does everything for the good of His world; who else has the power to perform any good act? Whosoever performs good works without holding any desire for their fruits will do good for himself.

"There is gold inside, hidden in your heart. You have not discovered it yet. If you once realize this secret treasure your worldly duties will vanish and you will not care for other works, just as a mother loves nothing better than to fondle and kiss her new-born baby. Go onward and do not stop until the goal is reached. The goal is the realization of God. By His grace His true devotee can see Him and can talk with Him just as I am talking with you".

Absolute silence prevailed when the blessed Lord spoke these words with earnest eloquence. Everyone's heart was moved by that divine love which was flowing with mighty force within the soul of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

With a smiling face the Bhagavan said: "You know all that I have told, but you do not realize how much you possess, in the same manner as Varuna, the lord of the ocean, does not care to know how many beautiful and valuable jewels there are in his boundless treasury of the deep".

VIDYASAGARA: "Revered sir, thou canst say so".

BHAGAVAN: "Yes; do you not know that very often a millionaire does not know even the names of his own attendants? He does not remember in what places his valuable things are kept".

Everyone was listening to this interesting conversation, when Bhagavan suddenly asked Vidyasagara: "Will you not come to the temple garden? It is a beautiful place".

VIDYASAGARA: "O yes; certainly. Thou hast been so kind as to come to me, shall I not return my visit to thee?"

BHAGAVAN: "A visit to me!" Oh, for shame! for shame!"

VIDYASAGARA: "My dear sir, why dost thou say so?"

HUMILITY OF RAMAKRISHNA

BHAGAVAN: "Well, we are like fishing-boats, small and light enough to row about in ponds, narrow canals or even in large rivers, but you are like a big steamer. Who can tell?—you might founder on the sand-bank if you venture too far up the stream; but now in this season steamers may go up without much danger".

VIDYASAGARA: "Oh I see; this is the rainy season".

At about eight in the evening it was announced that the carriage was ready to take Sri Ramakrishna back to the Thakurbati at Dakshineswara. The Bhagavan became absent-minded for a while; perhaps his mind was fixed upon the Divine Mother, or perhaps he was asking Her blessing upon his kind host. The Bhagavan then rose to bid him farewell and Vidyasagara, with a lighted candle in his hand, led the way downstairs and through the compound of his house to the gate. Outside the gate a carriage was waiting to receive the honoured

guest and his devoted companions back to the Thakurbati at Dakshineswara. An unexpected sight greeted the eyes of the party as they came out; there was a gentleman, who might have been a little under forty, standing before the gate with folded hands. He was dressed in white and wore a white turban on his head. He had a fair complexion and expressive eyes and a smile was on his face. No sooner did he see the Bhagavan than he fell at his feet with his head touching the ground.

The BHAGAVAN said: "Is it you, Balaram? How is it that I find you here?"

BALARAM[1] replied, smiling: "O revered sir, I have been waiting for some time here at the gate to see thee".

THE BHAGAVAN: "Why did you not come in?"

BALARAM: "I came late, so I would not interrupt thee, but thought it better to stay here".

The Bhagavan then stepped into the carriage with his companions.

Vidyasagara asked a disciple: "Shall I see the carriage hire is paid?"

The disciple replied: "No, sir, you need not trouble yourself. It has already been paid by a friend".

RAMAKRISHNA LEAVES VIDYASAGARA

The Pandit then folded his hands and bent his head and body to make his *Pranama* (salutation) to the Bhagavan. All assembled about the carriage did the same. The little group at the gate, with the venerable Vidyasagara at their head still holding the lighted candle in his hand, stood for a while looking in the direction of the carriage, wondering who this God-intoxicated person might be, so wise yet so child-like, so full of joy, so sweet, so divine! Verily an embodiment of Divine love from the heaven has come down like dew drops to quench the spiritual thirst of the suffering humanity. Surely he is a king among men, eager to solve for them the riddle of the universe.

[1]Balaram Basu was a Hindu zemindar in Calcutta. He was a true householder disciple of Ramakrishna. His house was blessed many a time by the visit of Ramakrishna and his beloved disciples. His whole family regarded Ramakrishna as the divine Incarnation in a human form. See Chapter XII.

CHAPTER V

DAY ON THE RIVER WITH KESHAB CHANDRA SEN

(1)

It was the day of the festival of Lakshmi.[1] Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room talking with Bijoy and Haralal, when a gentleman entered and announced that Keshab Sen[2] had come on board a steamer which had just arrived and was lying at anchor before the Ghat. A short while after Keshab's disciples came in and bowed down before the Bhagavan, saying: "Keshab Babu has sent us to thee with the request that thou wilt kindly join him, if it so please thy holiness". Sri Ramakrishna consented and he with several of his devotees was taken by Keshab's disciples to the steamer.

Ramakrishna Goes on Board the Steamer
Ramakrishna's Ecstasy

As the small boat which carried the Bhagavan came alongside, everybody was eager to have a glimpse of the blessed master and crowded at the gangway. Keshab was anxious to see that he got on board in safety. Mahendra who had been there for some time, looked at him and noticed that he was in *samadhi* and as motionless as a statue. It was with great difficulty that he was brought back to sense-consciousness to a degree in order to be taken into the cabin on the upper deck. The state of divine ecstasy had not entirely left him even then. He leaned on a disciple as he was led to the cabin. His body moved mechanically, but his mind was fixed on God. When he had

[1] Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune and prosperity.

[2] Keshab Chandra Sen was the third great Brahmo Samaj leader after Raja Rammohan Roy. He was born in 1838 and died in 1884 A.D.

In 1858 he became a member of the Adi-Brahmo-Samaj. In 1866 he founded a new branch under the name of Bharatavarshiya Brahmo-Samaj which was afterwards known as the church of the 'New Dispensation'.

In 1870 he went to England to propagate his mission. He was an eloquent preacher and orator. He accepted a great many of the teachings of Ramakrishna and regarded him as one who had constant communion with the Brahman.

entered the cabin, Keshab and others bowed at his feet. But what little sense-consciousness remained now began to leave him. Inside the cabin were a bench, a table and a few chairs. The Bhagavan was seated in one of the chairs; Keshab also took a chair and Bijoy another. Other devotees, most of them Brahmos, sat on the bare floor. The cabin being a small one, many remained standing at the door or at the windows looking in eagerly. The Bhagavan was absolutely devoid of outer consciousness. Everybody was watching his face. Keshab noticed that so large a number of people had come together in the cabin that the Bhagavan was in need of fresh air. The devotees all gazed with fixed eyes. After a time the Bhagavan came down from his *samadhi,* but the consciousness of the Divine presence was as intense as before. He talked to the Mother of the universe in words that were scarcely articulate, saying: "O Mother, why hast Thou brought me here? They are bound by the fetters of the world and are not free! Would it be possible for me to liberate them from their prison house?"

Paohari Baba of Gazipur

A Brahmo said to the Bhagavan: "Sir, these gentlemen have been fortunate enough to see Paohari Baba at Gazipur. The Baba is another holy man like thy revered self".

Sri Ramakrishna had not yet recovered the power of speech. His heart was full and he could not speak, but only smiled on the good man who talked of the Baba. The Brahmo continued: "Sir, Paohari Baba has thy photograph, which he has put up in his room".

Devotee's Heart, the Temple of the Lord

The Bhagavan smiled again, pointing to his body with his finger and in a low voice said: "A pillow-case! It is nothing but a pillow-case. But there is one thing to be borne in mind,—the heart of a devotee is the temple of the Lord. It is indeed a fact that the Lord is more or less manifest in all things, but

[1]Paohari Baba was a great Vaishnava saint who lived for many years in an underground cave near Gazipur The name 'Paohari', which literally means 'one who lives on air', was given to him because he could live for months without eating or drinking anything. He was regarded by all as the greatest Vaishnava saint of the age.

He dwells specially in the heart of a devotee (Bhakta). Thus a zemindar may be met at any of the houses of which he is the owner, yet people will say that he is usually to be seen in some particular drawing-room. The heart of the devotee is the Lord's drawing-room. If one wishes to meet the Lord, one would better seek an audience in the drawing-room.

Various Aspects of the Brahman

"The same Being whom the followers of non-dualistic (Advaita) Vedanta call the Brahman, the Absolute, is called *Atman* (Self) by the Yogis, and Bhagavan or the personal God with divine attributes by the devotees or Bhaktas (lovers of God). When a Brahmin worships the Lord, he is called a priest; and when the same Brahmin is employed in the kitchen, he is called a cook.

Discrimination of an Advaitin

"The follower of monistic (Advaita) Vedanta, who seeks to realize the absolute Brahman, discriminates, saying: 'Not this, not this' (*neti neti*). That is, the Absolute is not this, not that, not any finite object, not the individual soul, not the external world. When, as the result of this kind of reasoning, the heart ceases to be moved by desires; when, in fact, the mind is merged in the superconsciousness state, then the *Brahmajnana* is reached. One who has truly attained to this *Brahmajnana* realizes that the Brahman, the Absolute alone is real, and the world is unreal, and that all names and forms are like dreams. What the Brahman is, cannot be described by words, nor can one even say that He is personal. Such is the point of view of a non-dualist.

Bhakta's Attitude

The Innermost Feelings of a True Bhakta

"The dualist devotees and lovers of the personal God (Bhaktas), on the contrary, accept all states as real. Unlike the non-dualists, they look upon the waking states as a reality and they do not hold that the external world is like a dream. They say that the external world is the glory of the Lord. The heavens, stars, moon, mountains, oceans, men, birds and beasts,

all these He has created. He manifests His glory by and through these. He is both within and without. He dwells in our hearts. The most advanced Bhaktas say that the Lord Himself manifests as the twenty-four categories of the *Sankhya* philosophy, that He appears as the individual soul and the external world. A Bhakta wishes to enjoy communion with his Lord and not to become one with him. His desire is not to become sugar, but the taste of it. Do you know what are the innermost thoughts and feelings of a true devotee? He says: 'O Lord! Thou art the Master, I am Thy servant. Thou art my Mother, and I am Thy child'; or again: 'Thou art my Child and I am Thy father or Thy mother'; or thus: 'Thou art the Whole and I am Thy part'. The dualistic devotee does not wish to say, I am the Brahman'.

Raja Yogi

"A Raja Yogi also seeks to realize the Universal Being. His object is to bring the finite human soul into communion with the Infinite Spirit. He tries first to collect his mind which is scattered in the world of senses, and then seeks to fix it on the Universal Spirit; hence the necessity of meditating on Him in solitude and in a posture which causes no distraction.

Different Aspects of God

But all these various ideals are of one and the same Brahman, the difference being only in the names. It is the same Being whom men call by the name of the Absolute (Brahman), the Universal Spirit, the impersonal God, or the personal God with divine attributes".

(2)

The steamer had already started and was on its way to Calcutta. There were many who looked on Sri Ramakrishna with eyes that did not move, and who drank the nectar of the words that dropped from his hallowed lips. They did not perceive that the steamer was in motion. The temple garden of Kali had faded from sight. Beneath were the sacred waters which reflected the blue firmament above, but the murmur of the waves fell

unheeded on the ears of the devotees. The magic of the blessed vision had thrown a charm over them. They beheld before them a wonderful Being, a God-in-man and a man-in-God, with smiles playing on his sweet face, radiant with the joy of the Lord, and with eyes enhanced in beauty by the touch of Divine love. They gazed as if spell-bound, on one who had given up the world and its pleasures, on one intoxicated with the love of the Lord and who looked not for anything except the Lord".

The World as a Dream
The Realm of the Divine Energy
Relation between Brahman and Sakti
One God has Many Names

Sri Ramakrishna: "The followers of Advaita Vedanta maintain that creation, preservation and dissolution, the individual ego and the external world all these are the manifestations of the Eternal Energy (Sakti). They also say that when these are properly analysed, they appear as dreams, that the Absolute Brahman alone is the Reality and all else is unreal. Even Eternal Energy (Sakti) is like a dream, unreal; but you may analyse and discriminate thousands of time, you cannot transcend the realm of Divine Energy (Sakti) unless you have reached the highest state of *samadhi* or superconsciousness. The very thoughts like: 'I am meditating', 'I am thinking on the Absolute', are within the realm of Sakti. They are the manifested powers of that Eternal Energy. Therefore the Absolute Brahman and the Eternal Energy are inseparable and one. Again, the existence of one implies that of the other, as fire and its burning power. If you admit the existence of fire, how can you deny its burning power? No one can think of fire without thinking of its burning power. Again, the power of burning cannot be conceived as separate from fire. In the same manner, we cannot think of the rays of the sun without thinking of the sun itself. Again, we cannot think of the sun without thinking of its rays. Therefore, no one can think of the Brahman as apart from Sakti, or Sakti as separate from the Brahman. Likewise, no one can conceive of the phenomenon as independent of the Absolute, or of the Absolute as apart from the phenomenon. The same Eternal Energy, the Mother of all pheno-

mena, is creating, preserving, and destroying everything. She is called Kali, the Divine Mother. Kali is Brahman, the Brahman is Kali, one and the same Being. I call Him the Brahman when He is absolutely inactive; that is, when He neither creates, nor preserves, nor destroys phenomena; but when He performs all such actions, I call Him Kali, the Eternal Energy, or the Divine Mother. They are one and the same Being, the difference is in name and form, just as the same substance water is called by different names in different languages, such as *jal, pani, aqua, water,* etc. Yes, the Being is the same, only the names are different under different aspects —like the same substance expressed in different languages, such as *jal, water, aqua* and *pani,* etc. A tank may have four *ghats* (landing-places with steps). The Hindus drink the water from one *ghat* and call it *jal*; the Mohammedans drink from another and call it *pani*; while the English from the third and call it *water.* Similarly, God is one, only His names are different. Some call Him by the name of Allah, some God, some Brahman, others Kali, others again Rama, Hari, Jesus, Buddha".

KESHAB (smiling): "Please tell us once more, revered sir, in what different ways Kali, the Mother of the universe, is making Herself manifest in this world of Her Divine sports or *lila*".

THE MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE AND HER SPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (smiling): "Oh, the Mother sports with the world,—Her toy, under various aspects and names. Now She is the God unconditioned, absolute, formless (Maha-Kali): now the Everlasting as distinguished from Her works (Nitya-Kali). Under another aspect She is the Goddess of burning *ghats* or crematories, the dreaded Being who presides over death (Smasana-Kali); now again does She stand before us ready to bless, and to preserve Her children (Raksha-Kali); under another aspect She appears to be pleasing to the eye of Her devotees as the Mother with the dark blue colour, consort of the God of Eternity and Infinity. Maha-Kali and Nitya-Kali are described in the sacred books, the Tantras. When there was nothing—neither sun, nor moon, nor planets and nothing but darkness there was alone my Divine Mother, form-

less, the Eternal consort of the Infinite. As Mother with the dark blue colour (Shyama), She is tender and loving. She is the best-ower of all blessings and makes Her children fearless, and She is worshipped in the Hindu household. As preserver, She appears in times of plague, famine, earth-quake, drought or flood. At cemeteries, burning *ghats* or crematories, She appears in the form of destroyer. The dead body, the jackal, the spirits of destruction are Her terrible companions. She lives in the midst of those horrible scenes, of those fearful environments. Streams of blood, a garland of skulls thrown round Her neck, a girdle made of the hands of those that are dead, are the symbols that mark Her as the dread Mother, as the All-destroyer".

Creation of the World

"Now look at Her mode of creation. At the end of a cycle, upon the destruction of the world, my Mother, good Matron that She is, puts together the seeds of creation. The mistress of a house has a separate pot of her own in which she keeps sundry things such as seeds of vegetables, flowers etc. for future household use. (Further smiling): Yes, my friends, that is indeed so. The mistress of a house has such a pot in her possession. In it are kept the 'sea-foam' in a solid state, small packets containing seeds of the cucumber, gourd, and so on. She brings them out when wanted. In much the same way my Mother keeps the seeds of creation (*samskaras* of all objects, animate and inanimate) after the destruction of the world at the end of a cycle (*yuga*)".

Divine Mother Omnipresent
Divine Mother the Material and the Instrumental Cause

"My Mother, the primal Divine Energy, is both within and without this phenomenal world. Having given birth to the world, She lives within it. In the Vedas, we find the illustration of a spider and its web. She is the spider and the world is the web that She has woven. The spider brings the phenomenal web out of Herself and then lives in it. My Mother is both the container and the contained".

KALI, WHY BLACK ?

"Is Kali, the Divine Mother, black ? She looks black from a distance, but when realized, She is not black. The sky looks blue from a distance, but look at it near you, it has no colour. The water of the ocean is blue from a distance. Take a little up in the hand, it has no colour".

Saying this, the Bhagavan became intoxicated with Divine Love and began to sing:

"Is my Divine Mother black ?
O mind! What dost thou say ?
Though black, She with Her flowing hair
Illumines the lotus of the heart".

THE POWER OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

"Bondage and freedom, of both She is the maker. Through Her inscrutable power of *maya,* a man of the world becomes bound by lust and gold. Again, through Her grace, he becomes free. She breaks all fetters and takes Her children across the ocean of the world". Then the Bhagavan sand in his divine voice:

THE DIVINE MOTHER AND THE LIBERATED SOUL

1. O Mother, Thou art flying the paper-kite (of the human being) in the market-place of this world.
   It flies on the wind of hope, tied to the string of *maya.*
2. Ribs, nerves and bones make up its frame, of Thine own qualities hast Thou made the kite, to display Thine art.
3. Thou hast rubbed the string with the *manja* (paste with powdered glass) of worldliness, and it has become sharp.
   Among hundred thousand kites one or two have their strings cut, and are freed ;
   Then with a laugh Thou clappest Thy hands.
4. PRASAD says, The kite thus set free will fly swiftly on fair winds and drop beyond the ocean of this world.

DIVINE MOTHER'S WILL

SRI RAMAKRISHNA continued: "My Divine Mother is playful. The world indeed is Her sport. She does what She wills

and is blissful. It is Her pleasure to give freedom to one among a hundred thousand of Her children".

A BRAHMO: "Sir, She can, if She pleases, set everybody free. Why is it then that She has bound us hand and foot with the chains of the world ?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Well, I suppose it is Her will. Her will is to play with all these things. In the game of hide-and-seek (*luko-churi*), whoever touches the grand-dame is out. He no longer runs about. If all the players touch the grand-dame at the same time, how can there be any game ? The grand-dame would not like it; for she is pleased to have the play go on".

Then the Bhagavan, placing himself in the position of a man of the world and laying the trouble of his heart before the Mother, sang:

1. This is the grief for which I grieve.
   When Thou, O Mother, art here, thieves (passions) rob me though I am wide awake ?
2. I promise to repeat Thy holy name, but at the proper hour I forget.
   Now I have learnt and felt that all this is Thy trick.
3. Thou hast not given, so Thou hast not received aught to eat or to keep. Am I to be blamed for this ?
   Hadst Thou given, Thou wouldst surely have received; and I would have offered Thy gifts to Thee.
4. Fame or calumny, sweet or bitter—all is Thine. O Ruler of all feelings, abiding in them, why dost Thou hinder when I enjoy sweet ecstasy ?
5. PRASAD says: Thou hast given me a mind, but by a glance of Thine eye Thou hast so bent it, that I roam through this world, Thy creation, seeking joy but mistaking bitter for sweet (unreal for real).

DELUSIVE POWER OF MAYA

"Man has forgotten his true Self and has become worldly by the delusive power of *maya*. Therefore Prasad says: 'Thou hast given me a mind, but by a glance of Thine eye Thou hast so bent it that I roam through this world, Thy creation, seeking joy but mistaking bitter for sweet' ".

A BRAHMO: "Revered sir, is it true that God cannot be realised without giving up the world ?"

RENUNCIATION NOT NECESSARY FOR ALL

THE BHAGAVAN (smiling): "Oh no ! You do not have to give up everything. You are better off where you are. By living in the world you are enjoying the taste both of the pure crystalized sugar and of the molasses with all its impurities. You are indeed better off. Verily I say unto you, you are living in the world, there is no harm in that ; but you will have to fix your mind on God, otherwise you cannot realize Him. Work with one hand and hold the feet of the Lord with the other. When you have finished your work, hold His feet to your heart with both of your hands".

POWER OF THE MIND

"Everything is in the mind. Bondage and freedom are in the mind. You can dye the mind with any colour you wish. It is like a piece of clean white linen ; dip it in red and it will be red, in blue it will be blue, in green it will be green, or any other colour. Do you not see that if you study English, English words will come readily to you ? Again, if a Pandit studies Sanskrit he will readily quote verses from sacred books. If you keep your mind in evil company, your thoughts, ideas and words will be coloured with evil ; but keep in the company of Bhaktas, then your thoughts, ideas and words will be of God. The mind is everything. On one side is the wife, on the other side is the child ; it loves the wife in one way and the child in another way, yet the mind is the same.

"By the mind one is bound ; by the mind one is freed. If I think I am absolutely free, whether I live in the world or in the forest, where is my bondage ? I am the child of God, the son of the King of kings ; who can bind me ? When bitten by a snake, if you assert with firmness, 'There is no venom in me', you will be cured. In the same way, he who asserts with strong conviction, 'I am not bound, I am free', becomes free".

SENSE OF SIN

"Some one gave me a book of the Christians. I asked him to read it to me. In it there was only one theme—sin and sin,

from the beginning to the end. (To Keshab) In your Brahmo-Samaj the main topic is also sin. The fool who repeats again and again, 'I am bound, I am bound', remains in bondage. He who repeats day and night, 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner', becomes a sinner indeed".

Saving Power of God's Name

"It is necessary to have absolute faith in the name of the Lord. With absolute faith in Lord, a devotee should say: 'What ! I have uttered his holy name, can there still be sin in me ?—Can I still be in bondage ?' Krista Kishore was a pious Hindu, a Brahmin of Brahmins, who worshipped the Lord with single-minded devotion. He went to Brindavan. One day, while visiting the shrines, he felt very thirsty. He went to a well, and finding a man standing there, he asked him: 'Can you please draw some water for me ?' The man replied: 'O holy sir, I belong to a low caste,—a cobbler'. Krista Kishore thereupon said to him: 'It matters not. You say 'Siva' (the holy name of the Lord) and draw the water for me.

"By repeating the blessed name of God, man's body, mind and soul become absolutely pure. Why talk of sin and hell-fire ? Repeat but once, 'I shall never again do the evil deeds that I have committed in the past', and by your faith in His hallowed name you shall be freed from all sins".

Prayer to the Divine Mother

"I used to pray to my Divine Mother for true devotion (*bhakti*) alone. With flowers in my hands, I prayed: 'Do Thou, O Mother, grant that I may have pure and unalloyed devotion. Here is sin, here again is virtue ; I lay them at Thy feet ; oh take them both. Here is knowledge, here again is ignorance ; oh take them both and grant that I may have devotion alone. Here is purity and here again is impurity ; I desire neither of them. Here are good works, here are bad ; both I lay at Thy feet ; oh grant that I may have devotion alone and love for Thee' ".

Example of Janaka

"One living in the world may also see God. It was the case with Raja Janaka, the great royal devotee, who realized while

on the throne that the world was a structure of dreams. For a lover of God, however, such is not the feeling". And the Bhagavan sang:

He who has attained to *bhakti* or true devotion to the Lord says:

This world is the abode of happiness;
I eat, drink and enjoy its pleasures.
Janaka Raja was a great potentate;
In what was he lacking?
He harmonized God and the world
And tasted the joys of both.[1]

Value of Solitude

Sri Ramakrishna: "No one can suddenly become like Janaka. Raja Janaka performed great penances and austerities in solitude for many long years. Even when living in the world one should occasionally go into solitude. It will bring great good to one who can sincerely and earnestly cry for God three days and three nights in solitude, alone. Indeed, one day passed in that way would be a great gain. People will shed a flood of tears for wives and children, but who sheds one drop for the Lord? It is necessary to practise every now and then devotional exercises in solitude. A worldly-minded aspirant absorbed in various works and duties finds in the first stage of his spiritual life a great number of obstacles in the path of self-control and devotion. As a young tree planted on the foot-path needs a fence around it so that it may not be eaten up by goat, sheep or cattle, so in the first stage of a spiritual aspirant, a fence is necessary; but when the tree grows large and the trunk and roots are thicker and stronger, no fence is required. Then it is not injured even if an elephant be tied to it".

Solitude, a Remedy for Worldliness

"The disease of a worldly man is of a serious type; his organs with their functions are entirely out of order. Would you keep a water-jar full of water, savoury pickles and *chatnis*

[1] Janak-Raja mahateja tar chila kise truti,
(Se) edik-odik dudik rekhe kheyechila dudher bati.

in the sick room where is lying a delirious patient? If you wish to cure such a patient, you must have him removed from that room. If it is impossible you must have the jar, the pickles and the *chatnis* sent away. A man of the world is like a thirsty delirious patient; worldly attractions are like the water in the jar; sense objects are like the savoury pickles and *chatnis;* desire to enjoy those things is the patient's thirst. The mouth waters at the mere thought of the pickles. We should not therefore remain near them all the time. Hence solitude is the best remedy for worldliness. First acquire right discrimination and true dispassion and then live in the world. In the sea of the world there are crocodiles of passions and desires. Rub the body with turmeric-paste if you wish to bathe in this sea, for then crorodiles will do no harm to you. The turmeric is discrimination (of the real from the unreal) and true dispassion. God is only real, and the phenomenal universe is unreal.

Intense Devotion Necessary

"Along with this another thing is needed and that is intense devotion to God. The Gopis[2] of Brindavan had such devotion. They had an intense love for Sri Krishna, God-Incarnate".

The Bhagavan further said to Keshab and other devotees with great feeling: "You are Brahmos; you believe that God is formless and you do not believe in God-Incarnate. Well, it matters not. You need not accept Radha and Sri Krishna as Incarnations of the Supreme Being; but the intense love and yearning which the Gopis felt for Sri Krishna is a thing which you may well make your own, for yearning is the next step leading to God-vision".

(3)

It was ebb-tide. The steamer was going fast down-stream towards Calcutta. It had got to the other side of Howrah Bridge

[2] The milkmaids of Brindavan loved the Lord Sri Krishna who lived among them as a shepherd-boy. When eleven years old he left Brindavan. Sri Krishna is looked upon as an Incarnation of God. He was loved by everyone. He is the embodiment of Divine Love. Brindavan is the sacred forest near Mathura in India where the shepherd Krishna played his boyish sports with boys and girls and performed miracles.

within the sight of the Botanical Gardens. The Captain had orders to go a little farther down. How far the steamer had actually proceeded was not known to those who were listening to Sri Ramakrishna and watching his movements. They listened with such rapt attention that they had no idea either of time or of distance.

Keshab now offered the Bhagavan puffed rice (*muri*) with the kernel of cocoanut. All present were invited to partake of these. They took them in the folds of their cloth, ate and were very happy. It seemed as if a festival was being held on board the steamer. The Bhagavan noticed that Bijoy and Keshab were not quite at home in each other's presence. He wished to see them make up their difference, for was not his mission to bring peace and good-will among men ? He said to Keshab: "Look, my dear sir, here is Bijoy. As to your quarrels, well, do not worry yourselves on their account. There was once fighting even between Siva and Rama[3]. Siva was Rama's spiritual *Guru*. After a little fighting, they made it up and became once more as good friends as ever. But the fighting went on among their followers. The gibbering of the ghosts and the chattering of the monkeys could not so easily be quieted down. You too will be very good friends once again. But your followers, I dare say, will not follow your example. These differences, you know, are things that cannot be avoided. There was the tug-or-war even between father and son. Take the case of Rama and his sons Lava and Kusha. Take another case: The mother fasts on Tuesday for the welfare of her daughter, but the daughter, quarrelling with the mother, fasts on the same day for her own welfare, as if her welfare were different from that gained by her mother's fasting. In the same way, you, Keshab, have a religious society (Samaj) of your own, and Bijoy, too, must have a separate society of his own. Well, there is room for all kinds of things under Providence—even for quarrels and differences. When God-Incarnate (Krishna) Himself appeared at Brindavan, the question may well be asked: Why did Jatila and Kutila stand in the way of His mission of love ? I suppose His sport as a divine lover would have died a natural death for want of nourishment, but for these obstruc-

[3] *'Siva-Ramer Yuddha'.*

tions, brought about by Jatila and Kutila. Opposition adds zest to a thing. Ramanuja[4] held the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism). His *Guru* (spiriual guide), however, was an Advaitist (non-dualist without any qualification). They had their differences. Master and disciple disputed and refuted each other's opinions. This is natural. Be it so; still to the master the disciple is always his own".

The Nature of Disciples Must be Examined

They all rejoiced. Sri Ramakrishna said to Keshab: "You do not study and examine the nature of your disciples. For that reason they drop away. All men look alike, but they differ in their nature. In some the *sattva* quality is predominant, in others *rajas*, and in the rest *tamas*. *Pooli* (cakes) all look alike on the outside, but the contents vary; some may contain sweet, thickened cream, others cocoanut sweetened with sugar, while others may have boiled *kalai* (pulse) with no sweetening".

God, the One Master

"Do you know how I feel about it? Like a child I eat, drink and play, depending on my Divine Mother who knows everything. These three words prick me: *Guru* (spiritual master), *karta* (the Lord), and *baba* (father). I cannot tolerate them. The Infinite existence-intelligence-bliss is the one *guru* for all. He will teach everybody. I am only His child.

"It is a difficult task to teach others. One can become a true spiritual teacher only when one has realized God and received a divine commission from Him. So commissioned were Narada, Sukadeva and Sankaracharya[5]. If you are not com-

[4] Ramanuja was the founder of the Vishishtadvaita, or qualified non-dualistic school of Vedanta. He was born about 1017 A.D. at Sri Parambattur, a town near Madras in Southern India. He is regarded by his followers as the incarnation of Sesha or Ananta. He wrote Sanskrit commentaries on the *Upanishads*, *Vedantasutras* and the *Bhagavat Gita*. (*Prasthanatraya*), and preached his doctrines all over India. He is said to have lived for one hundred and twenty years and died in 1137 A.D. His doctrines were distinct from the absolute non-dualistic philosophy of Sankaracharya. He has now millions of followers among all classes of Hindus in India.

[5] Sankaracharya was the commentator of the *Vedantasutras* and the greatest exponent of Advaita Vedanta. He lived in India in the eighth century A.D.

missioned, who will listen to you ? None. Your preaching at best may produce some sensation which will soon die away. You know Calcutta and her fondness for the latest sensation. Milk puffs up so long as the fuel is burning violently, but when the wood is withdrawn, the puffing ceases instantly. The people of Calcutta are fond of new sensations".

Earnestness of a True Seeker

"The people of Calcutta go from one teacher to another for spiritual instructions and never reach the goal for want of their earnestness and tenacity. A certain man wanted water and began to dig a well at one place; but he gave up digging as soon as he found that the earth was hard and rocky. He then set to work at another place. The soil was sandy there, and he readily gave up digging at that spot. He looked about for another locality. In this way he wasted his time and energy without sinking the well. That is the way with these people. Their opinion good or bad is by no means worth having".

Divine Commission

"Divine commission cannot be obtained by mere imagination. Verily I say, the Lord can be realized and He will speak to thee. Then thou mayest receive His commission. What great power lies in such Divine command! By it mountains may be shaken to their foundation. What can a mere ordinary lecture do ? People may listen to it for a time, but they will soon forget it. It will not produce a lasting impression on them and they also will not live according to it".

Ordinary Spiritual Teachers are Blind

"For the teaching of Divine truths a badge of authority is indispensable. A man who does not possess such a badge, will be laughed at. He has not realized God and he tries to show the way to others. It is like the blind leading the blind. In this way more harm is done than good. When God is realized, the inner spiritual sight opens and it is then that the true teacher can perceive the sickness of the soul and can prescribe

the proper remedy. Without God's command a man easily becomes egotistic and thinks: 'I have the power to teach others'. Such egotism is the result of ignorance. In ignorance one feels: 'I am the doer'; but when one realizes 'God is the Lord and doer of all, I cannot do anything', then one becomes absolutely free even in this life. All misery and restlessness proceed from the sense of 'I' and 'me', 'I am the doer', 'I am the actor' ".

First See God, Then Help the World

"You talk glibly of doing good to the world. Is the world contained in a nutshell? Besides, who are you to do good to the world? First practise devotional exercises and realize God. Attain to Him. If He graciously gives you His powers (Sakti), then you can help others, and not till then".

A Brahmo Devotee: "Revered sir, are we to give up all works until we have seen God?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "No, why will you give up all works? Meditation upon God, chanting His holy name, and other devotional exercises are daily works which you should have to perform".

The Devotee: "But what about household works and business affairs?"

Pray That Worldly Work May Grow Less

Sri Ramakrishna: "Oh! you will also perform those, but only so far as is absolutely necessary for living in the world; and you should at the same time pray in solitude unto the Lord with tears in your eyes for His grace, and for strength to do your duties without seeking any reward. Say when you pray: 'Oh Lord, grant that my work in the world and for the world may grow less and less day by day, for I see that my work growing manifold only makes me lose sight of Thee. Sometimes I think that I do my duties unattached to the world, but I know not how I deceive myself and do them through attachment instead. I give alms to the poor, and behold, I seek for fame, oh I know not how!' "

God-Vision and Philanthropic Works

"Sambhu (Mullick)[6] talked of founding hospitals and dispensaries, schools and colleges, of building roads, sinking wells and digging tanks for the good of all. I said to him: 'Yes, whatever comes in your way and is absolutely necessary, you may do even that, without seeking any reward. Do not seek more work than you can well perform. If you do, you will forget the Lord. A man desired to see the shrine of the Divine Mother. On his way he stopped and spent all the day in distributing alms to the poor. When he went to the shrine, the door was closed and he could not see the Holy of Holies. The wise ones should first see the Holy Mother, by pushing their way through the crowd assembled at the gate of the temple, and after seeing Her, they may then turn their attention to almsgiving and other good works, if they so desire' ".

God-Vision End of All Performance of Duty

"All good works are for the realization of God. Works are the means and God-vision is the end. Therefore I said to Sambhu: 'Suppose you see God, or that God manifests Himself to you, will you say to Him: Lord, do Thou grant that I may have lots of dispensaries and hospitals, schools and colleges! A true devotee shall rather pray in this way: Grant, O good Lord, that I may have a niche in the lotus of Thy feet, that it may be my privilege to live always in Thy holy presence and that I may have deep and unalloyed devotion unto Thee' ".

Path of Bhakti Yoga Best for This Age

"Karma Yoga is very difficult. It is difficult in this materialistic age (*kali-yuga*) to get through all the works, all the duties laid upon us by the sacred books. Verily in this age, earthly life depends entirely upon material food. Works and duties—there is scarcely time enough for them. It will be all over with the patient suffering from the burning malaria fever if he is allowed to go through the slow process of treatment

[6] Babu Sambhu Charan Mullick was a Hindu multi-millionaire of Calcutta. He had a large garden-house near the temple of Dakshineswara where many a time he entertained Bhagavan Ramakrishna.

practised by the old-fashioned Hindu physicians. People are short-lived and the malaria carries one off in a few days. The specific medicine for the present day is Dr. D. Gupta's patent fever mixture, which produces a miraculous effect at once. Yes, in this age the one means of realizing God is *bhakti* or sincere devotion and love for Him, and earnest prayer and the chanting of His holy name and divine attributes. (To Keshab and other devotees) Your path, too, lies through devotion and self-surrender to the Lord (Bhakti Yoga). Blessed are ye who sing the name of Hari and chant the praises of my Divine Mother. Your path is right. Unlike the non-dualists, you do not believe that this world is only a dream. You are not Jnanis, but Bhaktas; you believe in a personal God, that is good. You are Bhaktas. If you can sincerely and earnestly cry for Him, you will surely obtain Him.

(To Keshab) "You talk against child marriage and the caste system, about female emancipation and female education. I say one thing is needful—the realization of God and devotion to Him. First realize God and all other things shall be added unto you. Jadu Mullick is a rich man. If you wish to cultivate his acquaintance, do not trouble yourself as to how much wealth he has; how many houses, country-houses and gardens he owns. First, be introduced to him and he will furnish you with all the necessary information afterwards".

Parable of the Deserted Temple

"There was a young man named Podo in a certain village. In that village was an old dilapidated temple. The holy image of God once worshipped there had disappeared and it was now the home of small bats. One day at nightfall the villagers were surprised to hear the sound of bells, gongs, and conch-shells issuing from the deserted temple. Men, women and children all flocked to the place. They thought that some devotee was worshipping some image of God newly set up within the temple by performing the *aratrika,* the evening ceremony of waving the lights and offering flowers, fruits and holy water. With folded hands they all stood listening to the sacred sounds before the temple. One of them, more curious than the rest, had the courage to go inside. To his surprise he saw that Podo

was ringing the bell and blowing the shell; but the floor was as dirty as before with impurities of all kinds and there was no image of God on the altar. He then called out, saying: 'O Podo, thou hast no Madhava (Sri Krishna, God-Incarnate) in the temple; how is it, then, that thou hast raised all this clamour by blowing the conch-shell? And behold! thou hast not even taken the trouble to cleanse the temple by removing the impurities and dirt of years and washing the floor with the holy water of the Ganges' ".

First Cleanse the Heart

"So first realize God in the temple of your heart. With that in view, you must cleanse it of all impurities, all sin and iniquity, all attachment to the world caused by the power of the senses. It is then that the time comes for blowing the shell, if need be. Talk of social reforms. You may well do so after realizing God. Remember, the *Rishis* of old gave up the world in order to attain to God. This is the one thing needful. All other things shall then be granted upto you".

(4)

The steamer had come back to Kailaghat (Calcutta). All on board held themselves in readiness to land. As they came out of the cabin they saw that the full moon had bathed the bosom of the holy Ganges and the adjoining banks with her mellow light. The Bhagavan with two or three disciples got into a cab which had been kept waiting for him on the bank. Nandalal, Keshab's nephew, also got in. He wished to go with the Bhagavan for some distance. When all had seated themselves in the cab, Sri Ramakrishna asked: "Where is Keshab?" In a few moments Keshab came up smiling and inquired who were going with him. Being satisfied with the answer, he bowed down to the ground before the Bhagavan, who affectionately bade him adieu.

The cab set out. The Bhagavan was filled with supreme joy as the carriage drove along. Suddenly he said: "I am thirsty; what is to be done?" Nandalal stopped the carriage before the gates of the India Club and went upstairs to bring water. It was brought in a glass tumbler. The Bhagavan,

smiling, asked: "Is the glass well washed ?" Nandalal replied: "Yes". The Bhagavan drank the water. He was childlike in his simplicity. Leaning through the window he began to look at various objects on both sides. His joy knew no bounds as he saw men, animals, carriages, houses, the moonlight, the lighted streets.

Nandalal got out at Calutola. The cab drove on and stopped before the door of Suresh Mitra's[7] house. Suresh was very much attached to the Bhagavan. He was not then at home. He had gone to visit a newly-purchased garden at Kankurgachi. His people opened a room on the ground-floor and invited the party to be seated there. The cab-fare was to be paid. Who was there to pay it ? Had Suresh been at home, he would have done so. The Bhagavan said to a disciple: "Ask the ladies of the house for the fare. I suppose they know well enough that their husbands are in the habit of coming to their place".

Narendra (Vivekananda) lived in the same neighbourhood, so the Bhagavan sent for him. Meanwhile the inmates of the house led him upstairs into the drawing-room. The matting of the floor was covered with a carpet and a white sheet. Three or four pillows were lying about. On the walls there hung a beautiful oil-painting which represented harmony of all religions: *sarvadharma-samanvaya* and *yata mat tata path*. Suresh got it designed and painted. In the painting Sri Ramakrishna was represented as pointing to Keshab that all religions lead to one goal—be it Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Christianity, or various sects.

The Bhagavan was conversing with smiles on his lips, when Narendra came up. His joy redoubled. He said to Narendra as he talked: "We enjoyed such a pleasant trip on board the steamer with Keshab Sen. Bijoy also was there, and many of those present here. You may ask Mahendra how I talked to Keshab and Bijoy about the mother and her daughter both observing fast on Tuesday each for the latter's welfare ; and how God's sport or sportive play (*lila*) in this world would

[7] Babu Suresh Chandra Mitra was a devoted householder disciple of Ramakrishna. The Bhagavan used to call him Surendra. Vide Chapter VIII.

suffer for want of nourishment in the absence of obstructions like Jatila and Kutila.

It was getting late. But Suresh had not come home as yet. The Bhagavan asked to go back to the temple at Dakshineswara. It was about half past ten and he wished to leave for the garden. The street was flooded with moonlight. The cab was at the door. The Bhagavan got in. Narendra and Mahendra bowed low to the Master and started for their homes.

CHAPTER VI

SUNDAY AT THE TEMPLE

(1)

NON-DUALISTIC VEDANTINS

The nineteenth of August, 1883, fell on Sunday and was the first day after the full moon; so the devotees had leisure to come and see their beloved Master at Dakshineswara. Everyone had free access. He talked with everybody who came. His visitors were from all classes of people—*Sannyasins*[1] and Paramahamsas[2], Hindus, Christians, and Brahmos, Saktas, Vaishnavas and Saivas,—women as well as men. It was noon. Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his usual place in his room. A disciple came and saluted him, falling at his hallowed feet. The Bhagavan made him sit down and kindly inquired after the welfare of him and of his family. A short while after, the Bhagavan began to talk to him upon the Vedanta. He said: "The *Ashtavakra-samhita*[3] deals with the knowledge of the *Atman* (Self). The knower of the Self declares: 'I am He, I am that supreme Self'. This is the view of all the *Sannyasins* belonging to the non-dualistic (Advaita) school of Vedanta. But it is not meant that a man of the world should hold such a view. He is doing all kinds of work; how at the same time can he be that Highest Self, the Absolute Brahman, who is beyond all action! The non-dualistic Vedantins hold that the Self has no attachment to anything. Pleasure, pain, virtue, vice, can never affect the Self in any way; but they do affect men who think that their soul is the same as the body. Smoke can blacken only the wall, but not the space through which it moves. There was a certain devotee named Krishna Kisore who used to say that

[1] The *Sannyasins* are those who have renounced the world and its pleasures for the sake of the Lord.

[2] Paramahamsas are those who have attained to *Nirvikalpa-samadhi*, or *Brahmajnana*.

[3] *Ashtavakra-samhita* is a work containing the highest exposition of the Advaita Vedanta, written by the ancient sage Ashtavakra, who was the preceptor of King Janaka.

he was *'kha'*, or empty space. He meant that he was the same as the highest Self, which is the Brahman, the Absolute, and who is sometimes likened to *Akasa* (infinite space) because nothing can be predicated of It. A true philosopher has some right to say this. As for others, such a sentiment is altogether out of place.

Thought of Freedom Brings Freedom

"But it is good for everyone to cherish the idea that he is free. 'I am free', 'I am free'; if a man constantly says this, he is sure to be free. On the other hand, he who always thinks that he is in bondage, brings bondage on himself in the end. The weak-minded man who always says, 'I am a sinner', 'I am a sinner', is sure to have a fall. A man should rather say: 'I repeat the holy name of God, how can there be any sin in me, or bondage of the world?'"

Maya and Daya

Then turning towards the disciple, the Bhagavan said: "Today my mind is not at ease. I hear from Hridaya[4] that he has been ailing much. Is this anxiety due to *maya* (attachment) or *daya* (compassion) towards him?"

The disciple did not know what to reply and remained silent.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Do you know what is *maya*? Love towards one's own father, brother, sister, wife, child, nephew, niece, is called *maya*, and compassion means loving all beings equally. Now what is this, my anxiety, due to *maya* or compassion? But Hridaya did a great deal for me. He served me much. He never hesitated to do all sorts of menial services for me. My mind will be set at rest if he can get the money he needs. Now whom am I to ask for money? And how can I ask, being a *Sannyasin*?

[4] Hridaya Mukherji was an old servant of Sri Ramakrishna and served him for nearly twentyfive years in the temple of Dakshineswara till 1881. He was a remote nephew of Sri Ramakrishna. His birthplace was in the village of Sihore, not very far from Kamarpukur, the birthplace of Ramakrishna Dev. He breathed his last towards the end of April, 1889. 'Hridi' was a pet abbreviation of his name used by Sri Ramakrishna.

At two or three o'clock in the afternoon two great devotees, Adhar[5] and Balaram, came and prostrated themselves before him and took their seats. They asked him how he was doing. The Bhagavan replied: "Well, my body is all right, but not so is the mind". He did not mention anything about Hridaya's illness.

(2)

The Law of Karma
The Divine Presence in Images

In course of his conversation, when the talk was about the Goddess Simhavahini[1] (seated upon a lion) installed in the household chapel of the Mullick family of Barabazar, he said: "Once I went to see the Simhavahini. She was then staying in one Mullick's house at Chashadhopapara. The house was almost a deserted one. The family had become very poor. In some places there was filth, in other places moss were growing undisturbed. The cement upon the wall was crumbling down, and brick-dust and sand were slowly falling. Other houses belonging to the Mullicks were very neat and clean, but this was not so. Can you explain why this was the case ? The truth is that everyone must reap the fruit of his past actions. We should believe in the law of *karma*. One thing, however, I saw in that deserted house, that the face of the Goddess was beaming with glory. We should believe in the divine presence in the images of the Deity.

"I went to Vishnupura[2]. The Raja has several good temples. In one of the temples there is the image of a Goddess named Mrinmayi[3]. A big tank is before the temple. But how was it that I smelled in the tank the scent that women use to perfume their hair ? I did not know that they offered such scents to the Goddess when they went to worship. I had not seen Her image near the tank, but in *samadhi* I saw Her Divine

[5] Adhar, whose full name was Babu Adharlal Sen, was a rich Hindu Deputy Magistrate of Calcutta. He was a devoted householder disciple of Ramakrishna who often sanctified his home by his holy visits.

[1] In Hindu mythology the Goddess Durga destroyed the demons, riding upon a wild lion. Hence Her name is 'Simhavahini'.

[2] The name of an ancient city in Bengal.

[3] Mrinmayi is Devi Durga.

form down to Her waist. The Divine Mother of the universe appeared to me in the form of Mrinmayi.

By this time other devotees had arrived. The talk then turned on the Kabul War and the Civil War that came after. One gave the news that Yakub Khan[4] had been deposed from his throne, adding: 'Sir, Yakub Khan is a great devotee'.

Trials of a Devotee

Sri Ramakrishna further said: "Well, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, are things one cannot separate from the body. We read in Kavi-Kankana's[5] *Chandi* that Kaluvira, a great devotee, was shut up in a prison. They placed a heavy stone upon his breast. Yet Kalu was the favourite child of the Mother of the universe. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, come with the body. How great a devotee was Srimanta! How fondly the Goddess loved his mother Khullana! But what an amount of trouble he had to go through! They took him to the scaffold to be executed.

A Devotee is Rich in Spirit

"A certain woodman, a great devotee, was fortunate enough to see the Goddess, and the Goddess loved him very much and showed her kindness towards him; but he had to go on with the trade of a woodcutter all through his life. He had to sell firewood to get his livelihood. It does not follow that a devoted lover of God must be very well off in the world. But he is rich in spirit, though he may be poor in worldly things.

"Devaki in prison saw God in the form of a human being holding conch-shell, discus, mace and lotus in His four hands; but she could not get out of the prison for all her God-vision".

Disciple: "But she should have got rid, not only of imprisonment, but of her body, that being the source of all her troubles".

[4] Yakub Khan was the Amir of Afghanistan who was deposed by the British after the Kabul War of 1879.

[5] Kavi-Kankana was a great poet of Bengal, whose famous work is entitled 'Chandi' or the exploits of the Divine Mother. Kaluvira and Srimanta were the heroes of this poem.

Body, Result of Past Action

Bhagavan: "One's body is the result of one's past actions. Therefore one must bear with it so long as the past actions are not cleared up. A blind man taking a bath in the holy water of the Ganges has his sins washed off, but his blindness continues. It is the result of the actions of his previous life. But however the body may be under the influence of pleasure and pain, however the body may be happy or miserable, the true devotee is all the same rich in spirit, in knowledge (*jnana*) and in the love of God (*bhakti*). Take for instance the Pandavas. How many dangers and difficulties they had to face! What wants and miseries to bear! But amidst all these they never lost their wisdom. Can you find others equally wise and devoted to God?"

At this time Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) and Visvanatha Upadhyaya[6], the Nepalese Resident in Calcutta, entered. Bowing down to Sri Ramakrishna, they took their seats. Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra to sing. There was hanging on the western wall of the room a *tanpura* (a stringed musical instrument). Narendra took it down and began to tune it. Everyone was intently looking upon his face, eager to listen to his songs.

The Bhagavan to Narendra: "This instrument no longer sounds as before".

Visvanatha: "It is filled, therefore there is no sound, as with a vessel filled with water".

Sri Ramakrishna: "But how do you explain the life of Narada and of other divine teachers? They had realized God, but still spoke. They were filled, but they gave forth sounds".

Visvanatha: "They spoke for the good of mankind".

The Bhagavan: "Yes, Narada and Sukadeva came down from the highest state of *samadhi*. Their hearts went out to those who were weary and heavy-laden and knew not God. They spoke for the good of others".

Narendra began to sing:

[6] Visvanatha Upadhyaya was a Brahmin scholar and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. He was like a consul of the Nepal Government to the British.

1. In the temple of the heart dwelleth the eternal Truth.
   Ever beholding His glorious and lovely form, when shall we dive in the sea of His beauty ?
2. In the form of infinite wisdom the Lord will enter my soul.
   The restless mind filled with wonder will take refuge at His blessed feet.
   Immortal Bliss, like embodied nectar, will rise in the firmament of the soul.
3. At Thy sight we shall be mad with joy even as the *chakora*[1] is maddened at the sight of the moon.
4. O King of kings, there is none like Thee, all good and peaceful.
   At Thy feet, O Beloved, I shall offer myself and thus fulfil the aim of my life.
5. Even here shall I enjoy heavenly Bliss, so great a privilege where could I find ?
6. O Lord, beholding Thy pure and perfect form, all sins will take flight, even as darkness vanishes before light.
7. O kindle in my heart the light of burning faith, fixed firm like the polar star, and thus, O Friend of the meek, fulfil my one desire. Day and night merged in the Bliss of Thy love. O I shall forget myself having attained to Thee.
   (O, when will this come ?)

Samadhi of Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna had lost himself in deep *samadhi* as soon as he had heard the words 'Immortal Bliss like embodied nectar'. There he sat with clasped hands, turning his face towards east. He was diving deep into the ocean of beauty of the All-blissful One. No external consciousness, no sign of breathing, no motion in any of his limbs, no quiver of the eye—sat like one drawn in a picture. He had gone away somewhere from this kingdom, from this world of the senses.

Returning from *samadhi,* the Bhagavan murmured in an indistinct voice: "Thou art I, I am Thou. Thou eatest, Thou and I eat. What is this ? Have I jaundiced eyes ? I see Thee everywhere. Wherever I cast my eyes, I see Thy form".

[1] *Chakora* is the name of a kind of aquatic bird.

Then He repeated the holy name of Krishna: "O Friend of the meek and gentle! O Lord of my heart! O divine Shepherd!"[8] After repeating this a few times, he again went into *samadhi*. Coming back to sense-consciousness, he opened his eyes and found that the room was full of people of every class. Narendra, seeing that the Bhagavan was in *samadhi*, had left the room and gone to the eastern *veranda*, where Hazra was seated on a blanket counting his beads. Narendra began to talk with him. In the meanwhile the Bhagavan looked for Narendra in the room, but he was not there. The *tanpura* (musical instrument) was lying on the floor. The devotees all had their eyes fixed upon the Bhagavan, who began thus, referring to Narendra: "He has lighted the fire. It matters not whether he remains in the room or leaves it".

Bliss Comes in Meditation

Then turning towards Visvanatha and his other numerous devotees, he said: "Meditate upon God, the Sole Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Eternal, and you also shall have bliss. That *Satchidananda* is always here and everywhere, only It is covered and obscured by the veil of ignorance. The less is your attachment towards the senses, the more will be your love for God".

Visvanatha: "The nearer we come to Calcutta, the farther we are from Banaras, and the nearer we come to Banaras,[9] the farther we are from Calcutta".

Lover of God

Bhagavan: "As Srimati (Radha)[10] approached Sri Krishna, she perceived more and more the charming fragrance of his sweet person. The more one approaches God, the more does one's love towards Him increase. The more the river nears the sea, the stronger it is subject to ebb and flow. The Ganges of knowledge flowing in the soul of a wise man runs only in one direction. To him the whole universe is a dream. He always lives in his own true Self (*Atman*). But the Ganges of

[8] Shepherd—Gopal Sri Krishna.
[9] At present 'Varanasi'.
[10] Srimati Radha was the beloved consort of Sri Krishna, the greatest of the saviours among the Hindus.

love in a devotee's heart does not run in one direction. It has its ebb and flow. A devotee laughs, weeps, dances, sings, He wants sometimes to enjoy his Beloved, to merge into his Beloved ! He swims in Him, dives, rises up in his joy as merrily as a lump of ice floats upon the water.

God the Absolute and God the Creator One

"But, in fact, God, the Absolute and God, the Creator, are one and the same Being. The Absolute Existence-Intelligence-Bliss is the All-knowng, All-intelligent and All-blissful Mother of the universe. The precious stone (*mani*) and its lustre cannot be separated in thought, for we cannot think of the stone without its brightness, nor can we think of the brightness apart from the stone. The Absolute Existence-Intelligence-Bliss, the undifferentiated appears as differentiated into many. He has various names applied to Him according to the various powers manifested. That is the reason of His having many forms. Hence a devotee has sung: 'O Mother Tara,[11] Thou art even all that'. Wherever there is action, such as creation, preservation and destruction, there is Sakti or Intelligent Divine Energy. But water is water whether it is calm or disturbed. That one Absolute Existence-Intelligence-Bliss is also the eternally Intelligent Energy which creates, preserves and destroys the universe. Thus it is the same Visvanatha whether he does nothing or performs his worship or visits the Governor-General. In all cases, it is the same Visvanatha, only these are his different *upadhis* or states.

Visvanatha: "Yes, sir, that is so".

Bhagavan: "I said this to Keshab Chandra Sen".

Visvanatha: "Well, sir, Keshab Chandra Sen does not respect our orthodox Hindu manners, customs and laws. How can he be a real saint ?"

The Bhagavan (turning towards his devotees): "Visvanatha never wants me to go to see Keshab Sen".

Visvanatha: "But your holiness will go. What can I do ?"

Bhagavan: "You go to see the Governor-General, who according to your *shastras*[12] is a *mleccha* (unclean), and that

[11] Tara is another name of the Divine Mother of the universe.
[12] Hindu sacred books are called *shastras*.

also for money, name and fame; and may I not go to see Keshab Sen? It does not become of you to speak in this way. You often say: 'It is God who has manifested Himself as the human soul and the world itself'. What you say you must mean and what you mean you must say".

After this Ramakrishna abruptly left the room and went to the north-eastern *veranda*. Visvanatha and other devotees remained waiting for him in the room. Narendra was found talking with Hazra on the *veranda*. Sri Ramakrishna knew that Hazra was an out-and-out non-dualist and a dry logician. He upheld that all the universe was a mere dream; that all kinds of worship and offerings were mental delusions; that God was the one changeless Entity; and that a man should only meditate upon his *Atman* (Self), and do nothing else.

BHAGAVAN (laughing): "What are you talking about?"

NARENDRA: "We are discussing themes all too big for ordinary mortals".

PURE BHAKTI AND PURE JNANA ONE

BHAGAVAN (laughing): "But however you may talk, know that pure self-less devotion (*bhakti*) and pure selfless knowledge (*jnana*) are both one; their goal is the same. Smooth and easy is the path of devotion leading to God".

NARENDRA: "There is no use in reasoning like a philosopher; make me, O Mother, mad with Thy love. I have been reading Hamilton's Philosophy, and he writes: 'A learned ignorance is the end of philosophy and the beginning of religion".

BHAGAVAN: "What does that mean?"

Narendra explained it in Bengali. Sri Ramakrishna laughed and thanked him in English, saying, 'Thank you.' Everyone laughed at this, for the Bhagavan's knowledge of English was confined to a few such expressions.

(3)

Soon twilight began to fall. The devotees one after another took leave of the Bhagavan, and so did Narendra.

Evening at the Temple

The day was drawing to a close. The temple-servant was arranging the lights. The priests were busy saying their prayers as they stood waist-deep in the sacred water of the Ganges, purifying themselves body and soul. They were shortly to go to their respective temples to perform the *Aratrika,* the evening ceremony. The young men of Dakshineswara had come with their friends to take a walk in the garden. They were strolling about the rampart, enjoying the sweet evening breeze made fragrant by the flowers and watching the slightly undiluting water of the swiftly-flowing Ganges. Some of them, perhaps the more thoughtful, could be found going about by themselves in the solitude of the sacred trees called the Panchavati[1].

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna also looked at the Ganges for some time from the western *veranda.*

It was evening. The lamp-lighter had lighted all the lamps of the big temple. The old maid-servant came and lit the lamp in the Bhagavan's room and burned incense there. In the meantime the *Aratrika* ceremony had begun in the twelve shrines dedicated to Siva. It began soon after in the temples of Kali, Mother of the universe, and Sri Vishnu. The united and solemn sound of gongs, bells, cymbals, grew more solemn and sweet as it was echoed back by the murmuring Ganges below.

It was the first lunar day after the full moon. A short while after nightfall the moon rose. Gradually the tops of the trees in the garden, as well as the big temple compound, were bathed in her balmy light. At the magic touch of her radiance the water of the Ganges shone bright like silver and flowed on dancing with great joy.

When at nightfall Sri Ramakrishna bowed down to the Divine Mother, he repeated the holy names of God, keeping time all the while by clapping his hands. In his room there were pictures of various Incarnations of God. He bowed before each picture, repeating the holy name of each. He also repeat-

[1] Five sacred trees (namely, Ashvattha, Bata, Bilva, Amalaki and Ashoka) planted in such a way as to form a grove to be used for contemplation.

ed his favourite *mantrams,* each having some lofty, unifying principle running through it, such as:

(i) *Brahma-Atma-Bhagavan.* (The absolute Brahman of the Vedanta, true Self and the personal God of the Bhakta are three in one and one in three).

(ii) *Bhagavat-Bhakta-Bhagavan.* (The Word, the devotee and the personal God are three in one and one in three).

(iii) *Brahma-Sakti, Sakti-Brahma.* (God the Absolute and the creative Energy are one and the same).

(iv) *Veda-Purana-Tantra-Gita-Gayatri.* (God of the scriptures and the holy texts.)

(v) *Saranagata, Saranagata.* (I take refuge in Thee, I am Thine, I am Thine.)

(vi) *Naham-Naham, Tuhu-Tuhu.* (Not I, not I, but Thou, but Thou.)

(vii) *Ami Yantra, Tumi Yantri.* (I am the machine ; Thou art the One who guides and controls the machine.)

After all these repetitions were ended, he meditated upon the Divine Mother with folded hands.

A few of the devotees had been walking about in the garden during the evening. When the *aratrika* ceremonies were over in the temples, one after another the devotees came in Sri Ramakrishna's room and saluted him.

He was sitting on his seat with devotees before him on the floor. He said: "Narendra, Rakhal and Bhavanatha—they are the *Nityasiddhas* (perfect even from their birth). They need no training. What training they go through is more than they need. You see that Narendra never cares for anyone. He was with me in Visvanatha's carriage the other day. When he was requested to sit upon the better seat, he paid no heed at all. Moreover, he never shows to me that he knows anything, lest I praise him before others. He has no *maya,* no attachment. He looks as if he were free from all bondage. For a single individual he has many gifts and many noble qualities. He is also very courteous in his manners. He knows how to control his senses ; he has said that he will not marry, but will live a pure life. That is good. I always go into *samadhi* when I see him.

Character and Associations

"We mould our character according to the company we keep; and we keep such company as is in harmony with our character. For this reason the Paramahamsas (perfect souls) like to keep the company of innocent children because their minds are pure, simple and unstained by worldliness".

As Sri Ramakrishna was speaking these words, a worthy Brahmin entered the room and bowed down at his feet. The Bhagavan had known him before and loved him because he was sincere and simple. He had studied Vedanta in Banaras, the seat of great learning. Ramakrishna said to him: "Well, you have not been here for a long time. How are you?"

The Brahmin, smiling, replied: "Revered sir, the duties of the world, as thou knowest, take most of my time".

He then took his seat and Ramakrishna continued. "You remained in Banaras for a long time. Tell us what you saw there. Let us hear something about Dayananda[2]".

Brahmin: "Yes, I met Dayananda. Thou hast also seen him".

Ramakrishna: "Yes, I went to see him once. He was staying in a garden-house not very far from here. That day he had an appointment with Keshab Sen. He was a great scholar; he also believed in the *Devas* (perfected spirits), but Keshab did not, whereupon he said: 'If God created all these phenomena, could He not create *Devas*?' He believed in one God, but without form. Visvanatha was repeating the holy name of the Lord, 'Rama, Rama'; at this he said: 'Better repeat the name *Sandesha, Sandesha*' (sweetmeat, sweetmeat)".

Braihmin: "In Banaras, Dayananda had long theological discussions with other Pundits. In the end all the Pundits unanimously stood on one side, while he stood alone on the other; and then the Pundits drove him from the city by raising the outcry: 'Dayananda's position is false and he must not be accepted.' I also saw Colonel Olcott, the theosophist. The theosophists believe in the existence of the Mahatmas, the

[2] Dayananda Saraswati was a *Sannyasin* of the Advaita Vedanta school. He was a great Vedic scholar, speaker and a Hindu reformer of the nineteenth century. He wrote Sanskrit commentaries on the Vedás and was the founder of a reformed Hindu sect known as the Arya Samaj. He died in 1883 A.D.

realm of the moon, the realm of the sun and the astral realms. They believe that the astral bodies go to these places and so on. Revered sir, what dost thou think of Theosophy ?"

Devotion to the Supreme

Ramakrishna: *"Bhakti,* devotion to the Supreme, is the only thing worth having. Do they seek *bhakti* ? Then it is good. If their aim be the realization of God, then they are all right; but by simply dwelling upon these realms and Mahatmas one cannot search after God. One should practise *sadhana* (devotional exercises) to attain true *bhakti.* One should have extreme longing for realization. One should gather up all the mental activities and concentrate them upon Him. Realization of God does not come so easily; it requires a great deal of *sadhana.* A man asked: 'Why can I not see God ?' I replied: 'If you wish to catch a big fish, which lives in deep water, you will have to make many preparations to attract him. You must get the line, rod, hook and float; you must throw savoury bait; then when you see bubbles in the water, you may know that he has come near. Similarly, if you wish to see God, devote yourself to the practice of true *bhakti".*

A Devotee: "Which is better, *bhakti* or Jnana ?"

Bhakti and Jnana

Ramakrishna: "The highest form of *bhakti* comes through extreme love for God. Three friends were walking through a forest. A tiger appeared. One of them cried out: 'Brother, we shall be devoured by the tiger'; the second said: 'Why shall we be devoured ? Come, let us pray to the Lord'. Hearing this, the third one replied: 'Oh no, why trouble the Lord ? Let us climb this tree'. The man who said: 'We shall be devoured', did not know that the Lord is the protector of all; he who wished to pray to the Lord was a Jnani; he knew that the Lord is the Creator, Protector and Destroyer of all phenomena; but the third man, who said: 'Why trouble the Lord, let us climb the tree', was a true lover of God. He had the taste of divine love, the highest form of *bhakti.* In one aspect of divine love (*prema*) the lover thinks of himself as greater than the object of love; he has the constant desire to protect the Beloved and

make Him happy by removing all troubles and anxieties. The Gopis had true *prema,* or divine love.

Divine Love and Its Various Aspects

"In divine love the sense of 'I' and 'mine' exists, as was shown by Yasoda, the mother of the divine Incarnation, Krishna. For her, Krishna was only a son and not the Lord of the universe. She loved to nurse him and take care of him, always calling him 'my Krishna', and feeling the same anxiety about him that an earthly mother would feel about her son. When a certain saint spoke to her, saying: 'Your Krishna is the absolute Master of the world; he is not human'; Yasoda, replied: 'Oh no, he is not the Lord of the universe: he is my child. I cannot think of him as other than my child'. Divine love is manifested by various relations; the closer the relation, the stronger the tie of love. The relation of a servant to his master was manifested by Hanuman; the relation of a friend to his friend was shown by Arjuna to Krishna; while the Gopis were devoted to the Lord as their divine husband.

Parable of the Tiger

"Some people think that they are in bondage (*baddha*), that they will never attain to divine wisdom or to divine love. But all this fear vanishes from the heart of a true disciple if his *Guru,* or spiritual guide, be gracious to him. There was a flock of sheep in the woods; suddenly a tigress jumped into their midst. At that moment she gave birth to a cub and died on the spot. The kind-hearted sheep took care of the cub, and brought it up among them. They ate grass, the cub followed their example; they bleated, the cub also learnt to bleat. In this manner the cub grew up not as a young tiger but like a sheep. One day a full-grown tiger came that way and watched with wonder the grass-eating tiger. The real tiger drew nearer, but the cub began to bleat. Then the real tiger dragged him to the edge of a lake and said: 'Look here! compare your face with mine. Is there any difference? You are a tiger like me; grass is not your food; your food is animal flesh'. But the grass-eating tiger could not believe it. After a long time the real tiger convinced him that he was of the same species. Then

he gave him a piece of flesh to eat, but he would not touch it; he began once more to bleat and to seek for grass. At last, however, the real tiger forced him to eat animal flesh; at once he liked the taste of the blood, gave up his grass-eating and bleating habit and realized that he was not a sheep but a tiger. He then followed the real tiger and became like him".

Human Soul, the Child of God

"The human soul is the child of God, but it does not know it, and therefore it lives like an ordinary mortal (sheep); but when, by the grace of the *Guru,* he realizes his true nature, he becomes free from all fear and attains to perfection. Therefore I say, when the grace of the *Guru* comes, all fear vanishes. He will make you know who you are and what you are in reality. You will have to do very little for yourself after you have received that grace. You will then be able to distinguish between the real and the unreal and to realize that God is Truth and the world is unreal".

Parable of the False Sadhu

"A fisherman came to a garden at night and threw his net in the pond to catch some fish. Hearing the noise, the owner sent his men to capture him. The men came with torches in their hands to discover the thief. In the meantime the fisherman dropped his net, covered his face with ashes and sat under a tree, pretending to be a holy man absorbed in meditation. The men could not find the thief; they simply noticed that a holy man was meditating under a tree. So they returned to the owner and told him what they had seen. Everybody then brought flowers, fruits, and sweets to the holy man and paid him great honour and respect. Next morning crowds of people came to see the *Sadhu* and offered him money and various other things. The fisherman thought: 'How strange it is! I am not a holy man, still people have so much respect for me and I have received so many gifts. If I become a genuine *Sadhu* (Anchoret), how much more I shall get! Undoubtedly I shall see God'. If false impersonation of a holy man could awaken so much spirituality in him, what could be said of one who has practised

sincerely all virtues of a true holy man! He will realize what is real and what is unreal, that God is Truth and the world is unreal".

A DEVOTEE: "Where shall I mediate on God?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "The heart is the best place to meditate upon Him".

CHAPTER VII

SOME INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA (AS TOLD BY HIMSELF)

(1)

Days of Struggle

RAMAKRISHNA: "I practised austerities for a long time. I cared very little for the body. My longing for the Divine Mother was so great that I would not eat or sleep. I would lie on the bare ground, placing my head on a lump of earth, and cry out loudly: 'Mother, Mother, why dost Thou not come to me?' I did not know how the days and nights passed away. I used to have ecstasy all the time. I saw my disciples as my own people, like children and relations, long before they came to me. I used to cry before my Mother, saying: 'O Mother! I am dying for my beloved ones (Bhaktas); do Thou bring them to me as quickly as possible'."

All Desires Fulfilled

"At that time whatever I desired came to pass. Once I desired to build a small hut in the Panchavati for meditation and to put a fence around it. Immediately after, I saw a huge bundle of bamboo sticks, rope, strings and even a knife, all brought by the tide in front of the Panchavati. A servant of the temple, seeing these things, ran to me with great delight and told me about them. There was the exact quantity of material necessary for the hut and the fence. When they were built, nothing remained over. Everyone was amazed to see this wonderful sight.

"When I reached the state of continuous ecstasy, I gave up all external forms of worship; I could no longer perform them. Then I prayed to my Divine Mother: 'Mother, who will now take care of me? I have no power to take care of myself. I like to hear Thy name and feed Thy Bhaktas and help the poor. Who will make it possible for me to do these things?

Send me someone who will be able to do these for me'. In answer to this prayer came Mathura Babu[1], who served me for a long time with true faith and intense devotion. Again at another time I said to the Mother: 'I shall have no child of my own, but I wish to have as my child a pure Bhakta who will stay with me all the time. Send me such a one'. Then came Rakhal (Brahmananda).

"Those who are my own, are parts of my very Self".

(2)

Visit to Zoological Garden

In referring to the time of joyous illumination which immediately followed his enlightenment, Sri Ramakrishna exclaimed: "What a state it was! The slightest cause aroused in me the thought of the Divine Ideal. One day I went to the Zoological Garden in Calcutta. I desired especially to see the lion, but when I beheld him, I lost all sense-consciousness and went into *samadhi*. Those who were with me wished to show me the other animals, but I replied: 'I saw everything when I saw the king of beasts. Take me home'. The strength of the lion had aroused in me the consciousness of the omnipotence of God and had lifted me above the world of phenomena".

Divinity Everywhere

"Another day I went to the parade-ground to see the ascension of a balloon. Suddenly my eyes fell upon a young English boy leaning against a tree. The very posture of his body brought before me the vision of the form of Krishna and I went into *samadhi*.

"Again I saw a woman, wearing a blue garment, under a tree. She was a harlot. As I looked at her, instantly the ideal of Sita[2] appeared before me. I forgot the existence of the harlot, but saw before me pure and spotless Sita, approaching Rama,

[1] Mathura Babu was the son-in-law of Rani Rashmani, the founder of the temple garden at Dakshineswara. He recognized the divine powers and superhuman character of Sri Ramakrishna and became his devoted disciple.

[2] Sita was the consort of Rama, the divine Incarnation and the Hero of the *Ramayana*. She was the perfect type of womanhood according to the Hindus.

the Incarnation of Divinity, and for a long time I remained motionless. I worshipped all women as representatives of the Divine Mother. I realized the Mother of the universe in every woman's form.

"Mathura Babu, the son-in-law of Rashmani, invited me to stay in his house for a few days. At that time my mind was filled with the idea that I was a woman and a maid-servant of my Divine Mother. The ladies of the house had the same feeling; they did not look upon me as a man. As women are free before a young girl, so were they before me. My mind was above the plane of sex-consciousness.

"What a divine state it was! I could not eat here in the temple. I would walk from place to place and enter into the house of strangers after their meal hour. I would sit there quietly, without uttering a word. When questioned, I would say, 'I wish to eat here'. Immediately they would feed me with the best things they had".

(3)

Visit to a Poor Brahmin

Sri Ramakrishna: "Once I heard of a poor Brahmin who was a true devotee and who lived in a small hut in Baghbazar. I desired to see him, so I asked Mathura Babu to take me to him. He consented, immediately ordered a large carriage and drove me there. The Brahmin's house was so small that he scarcely had room to receive us, and he was much surprised to see me coming with such a rich man in such a carriage".

Visit to Devendra Nath Tagore

"At another time I wished to meet Devendra Nath Tagore.[3] He is a very rich man, but in spite of his enormous wealth he repeats the holy name of God and is devoted to Him. For this reason I desired to know him. I spoke about him to

[3] Devendra Nath Tagore was a Hindu multimillionaire of Calcutta. He was born in 1818 A.D. In 1841 he became a follower of Raja Rammohan Roy, the founder of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, and in 1844 he became the Acharya, or the spiritual leader of this Theistic Hindu Church. During the latter part of his life he retired from the world and devoted

Mathura Babu. He replied: 'Very well, Baba, I will take thee to him; he was my classmate'. So he took me and introduced me to him, saying: 'This holy Paramahamsa has come to see you. He is mad after God'. I saw in him a little pride and egotism. It is natural for a man who has so much wealth, culture, fame and social position. I said to Mathura Babu: 'Tell me, does pride spring from the wisdom or from ignorance? He who has attained to the highest knowledge of the Brahman cannot possess pride or egotism, such as, I am learned, I am wise, I am rich, and so on'. While I was speaking with Devendra Nath Tagore, I went into a state from where I could see the true character of every individual. In this state, the most learned Pandits and scholars appear to me like blades of grass. When I see that scholars have neither true discrimination nor dispassion, then I feel that they are like straws, or they seem like vultures who soar high in the heavens, but keep their minds on the charnel-pits below on the earth. In Devendra, I found both spiritual knowledge and worldly desire. He has a number of children, some of whom are quite young. I said: 'When you have so much spiritual knowledge, how can you live constantly in the midst of so much worldliness? You are like Raja Janaka; you can keep your mind on God, remaining amid worldly pleasures and luxury. Therefore I have come to see you. Tell me something of the Divine Being'. Devendra then read some passages from the Vedas and said: 'This world is like a chandelier, and each *Jiva* (individual soul) is like a light in it'. Long ago, when I spent nearly all my time meditating at the Panchavati, I saw the same thing. When Devendra's words harmonized with my experience, I knew that he must have attained to some true knowledge. I asked him to explain. He said: 'Who would have known this world? God has created man to manifest His glory. If there were no light in the chandelier, it would be all dark. The chandelier itself would not be visible'. After a long conversation Devendra Nath Tagore requested me to come to the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj. I answered: 'If it be the will of the Lord. I go wherever He takes me'."

his time entirely to spiritual studies. He was regarded by the Hindus as the Maharshi, or the holy man of his age. He was the father of the great Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore.

(4)

VISIT TO PADMALOCHANA

SRI RAMAKRISHNA said: "Padmalochana was the most eminent scholar in the court of the Raja of Burdwan. He came to a garden-house near Dakshineswara, and as I had a desire to meet him, I sent Hridaya to find out whether he had pride or not. I learned that he was simple and absolutely free from scholarly pride, and so I went to see him. He was indeed a great scholar and a true Jnani. He defeated all the great Pandits and theologians. He said that when he was in the court of the Raja, a theological discussion arose regarding the Hindu Trinity,—whether the first person of the Trinity, Brahma was greater than the third person of the Trinity, Siva. The Pandits referred to him for the final decision and Padmalochana replied: 'I have seen neither Brahma nor Siva; how can I decide?' He wished to hear me sing the praises of my Divine Mother. I had a long conversation with him. He became truly devoted to me and said: 'I have never felt so much happiness anywhere'. He revered me although I used to cry for my Divine Mother like a child."

(5)

DISTASTE OF WORLDLY CONVERSATION

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Nothing but discourses on God appealed to me at this period. If I heard worldly conversation, I would sit in a corner and weep bitterly. When I went with Mathura Babu to Banaras, once I was sitting with him in the drawing-room when some friends came in to see him and began to discuss worldly affairs. 'So much we have gained, so much we have lost'. Hearing this I was in tears and cried aloud: 'Mother, why hast Thou brought me here? I was much better off in the temple. Have I come to the holy city to hear talks only about woman and gold? But there in the temple I did not have to listen to such conversation'."

LONGING TO HEAR ABOUT THE SUPREME

"I was at this time like a young boy and so Mathura Babu fulfilled all the desires that arose in my mind. My heart and

soul, however, were constantly longing to hear about the Supreme Being. I searched for the places where the holy scriptures were expounded. There was a Brahmin in the neighbourhood who was a great Pandit and who had true faith. I used to go to hear him very often. A saint lived nearby on the bank of the Ganges and I wished to go with this Brahmin to see him; but a priest who looked upon the world as a dream discouraged me by saying: 'The body of a saint is an earthly cage; what good can one obtain by visiting such a cage?' I spoke of this to the Brahmin and he replied: 'He who thinks of God, he who repeats his holy name and has renounced everything for the sake of the Lord, must not be regarded as an ordinary mortal with earthly cage. The priest does not know that the body of a devotee is a spiritual form full of divine intelligence'. This Brahmin once asked me why I had thrown away my Brahminical thread. I replied: 'When the storm of divine ecstasy overtook my heart and soul, it blew away all signs of caste and creed. If you once become mad after God, then you will understand me'. But after some time this Brahmin became intoxicated with divine ecstasy. He would utter nothing but 'Om, Om', and sit in silence in his own room. He would not mix with or speak to anyone. His friends and relatives called in physicians. He told one of them: 'You can cure my disease, but do not take my 'Om' from me.' Once I went to see him when he was in this state. I asked him what was the matter and he answered: 'The tax-collectors have been here and I am wondering what I shall do. They said that they would seize my belongings'. I replied: 'What will you gain by thinking in this way? Let them sell your belongings. If they put you in jail, they cannot harm you, because you say that you are nothing but (*kha*) infinite space'. I would often repeat this, his own statement, to him and say: 'As you are infinite space, no tax can be drawn out of you'."

(6)

ABSOLUTE FRANKNESS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "During this period I was absolutely outspoken. I observed no formality or etiquette; I was fearless. Once I met a rich zemindar and asked him: 'What is our

highest duty? Is not the attainment of God our highest duty?' He replied: 'We are men of the world; salvation is not for us. When even Yudhisthira[4], the purest and the most perfect of mortals, had to see purgatory in a vision because he had once wavered for half a second from absolute Truth; what can we expect for ourselves?' I could not bear his words and rebuked him sharply, saying: 'What kind of man are you, that you think of the momentary vision of purgatory? You must not think of that, but think of Yudhishthira's truthfulness, forgiveness, patience, right discrimination, renunciation, devotion and love for God'.

"At another time I went to see a zemindar who had the title of Raja, and I told him plainly that I could not call him Raja because he was not really one.

"One day I saw a pious Brahmin who was counting his beads on the bank of the Ganges. I stood near him and knew that his mind was not fixed on God but on earthly things. Immediately I roused him by striking him on the shoulder. At another time Rashmani, the founder of the temple, was performing devotional exercises in the temple while I was singing the holy song of the Divine Mother. I perceived that her mind was distracted by worldly thoughts and instantly I roused her in the same manner. In amazement she folded her hands and remained motionless before me".

(7)

Visit to Keshab Sen

Keshab Chandra Sen was suffering from a serious illness. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was very anxious to see him. So he came one day with a few of his disciples to Keshab's home, where he was received by some of Keshab's disciples. They led him to the drawing-room and seated him on a couch. The room was fitted up with modern furniture. The Bhagavan looked at it for a moment; then his mind turned within and he went into *samadhi*. After recovering sense-consciousness, he spoke thus:

[4] Yudhisthira was the hero of the *Mahabharata* and a Hindu emperor of ancient India.

Body and Atman

"There are two, the physical body and the *Atman;* the body is born, so it must die, but *Atman* is deathless. It is separate from the body, like a nut in the shell; but when the nut is unripe, it is difficult to separate the kernel from the shell; so it is with worldly people who have not realized God. Their *Atman* remains attached to the body; but in true knowledge the *Atman* appears as separate from the body".

Perfect Knowledge Brings Realization of Oneness

At this moment Keshab entered the room. He was extremely thin and looked almost like a skeleton. He could hardly stand on his feet. With great difficulty he walked to the couch and sat at the feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. The Bhagavan came down from the couch and sat on the floor. Keshab touched his forehead to the floor and remained prostrate before him for some time. Sri Ramakrishna held Keshab's hand and said: "As long as there is knowledge of variety, so long there is bondage. When perfect knowledge comes, man realizes one Spirit in all. In that state he also sees that the same One has become the individual soul and the phenomenal world with its various states and elements. It is true that the Universal Spirit dwells everywhere, but His manifestation varies. In some places there is greater manifestation and in others less. Wherever there is greater manifestation of the Spirit, there is also greater manifestation of Divine powers".

Unity and Variety

"First you will have to realize unity by discrimination: 'Not this, not this' (*néti neti*). Then after reaching this state of realization, when you come down to phenomena, you will discover that variety has come from unity and the same unity is the goal of variety. The difference in the manifestation of Sakti or power makes the variety. When the flood of spiritual realization comes in the soul, like a sheet of water the Universal Spirit covers everything. All distinctions vanish. Then a boat can pass over a field and the path from one place to another becomes straight across the water".

Meaning of Keshab's Illness

Keshab was listening with rapt attention. Although the room was crowded, absolute silence prevailed. The Bhagavan, looking at Keshab, then asked: "How are you ? How do you feel ? You are suffering ; but your illness has a deep meaning. In this body you have gone through various stages of spiritual development ; the body is now suffering from the reaction. When the spiritual waves arise, the consciousness of the body vanishes ; but it tells upon the body in the end. When a big steamer plies in the water of the Ganges, I have seen the waves dash against the shore some time after ; the larger the boat, the stronger the waves ; sometimes they break down the banks. If an elephant enters a small hut, it shakes it and breaks it into pieces ; so when the elephant of the spiritual ideal enters into the body, it shakes and sometimes shatters it. What happens, do you know ? If there be a fire in the house, it burns up many things. Similarly, the fire of divine wisdom burns all passion, anger and other enemies, and in the end destroys the sense of 'I, me and mine'. The body is then wrenched and shattered. You may think that everything is finished, but so long as there is the least sign of illness, so long He will not make you free. If you enroll yourself as a patient in a hospital, you cannot come out before you are absolutely cured".

Keshab began to smile. The Bhagavan continued: "Seeing the condition of my body during illness Hridaya used to say: 'I have never seen so much spirituality with such a state of body". But although my body was weak, still I never stopped talking of God with others. At one time, I remember, I was thin like a skeleton, yet I would continue discussions on spiritual subjects for hours".

Everything the Will of God

Then shedding tears of sympathy for Keshab, the Bhagavan said: "It is His will. Everything happens by Thy will, O Lord ! Thou doest Thy work ; by mistake people say: 'I do'. The gardner sometimes uncovers the roots of rose-bushes that the dew may fall upon them. Sometimes he trims off some of the roots so that the flowers will become larger. Perhaps the Lord is preparing you to do greater work. Last time when you were

ill, I was so anxious about you that I would cry at night and pray to my Divine Mother for your recovery. Sometimes I said to my Mother: 'If Keshab passes away, with whom shall I talk about God ?' But this time I do not feel the same way".

At this moment Keshab's aged mother came near the door and addressed the Bhagavan, saying: "May Keshab be cured of his illness".

THE BHAGAVAN replied: "Pray to my blissful Divine Mother. She will remove all pain and trouble. (To Keshab) Do not spend so much time with your family and children. Their company will drag you to worldliness. You will feel better if you think of God and talk about Him".

KESHAB'S MOTHER: "Do thou bless my Keshab".

RAMAKRISHNA: "What power have I ? God will bless him. Thou doest Thy work, O Divine Mother ! People say by mistake, 'I do it'. Two are the occasions when the Lord smiles. First, when brothers remove the chains which partition off the family property, saying: 'This is mine and that is thine'; and secondly, when the physician of a dying patient declares: 'I shall cure him and save his life' ".

Keshab then began to cough and could not remain longer, so he bowed down before the Bhagavan, saluted him, and with great difficulty walked out of the room. A Brahmo devotee said: "Bhagavan, lay thy hand on his head and bless him".

RAMAKRISHNA replied: "It is not for me to bless anyone".

He then gently touching his arm said: "I cannot say to anyone, 'Be thou cured.' I never asked my Divine Mother for that power. I simply ask for pure love and nothing else".

Sri Ramakrishna then rose to take leave. Keshab's disciples accompanied him to the door with great reverence, and he left the house with his disciples.

CHAPTER VIII

FEAST AT THE GARDEN-HOUSE OF SURENDRA

(1)

Sri Ramakrishna was invited by one of his beloved disciples, Surendra, a householder, to a feast arranged in his garden-house at Kankurgachi near Calcutta.

RAMAKRISHNA'S ECSTASY

These feasts were invariably the occasions for the gathering of his disciples, devotees and admirers. These were the times of real festivity and rejoicing, during which the holy name of God was sung to the accompaniment of *mridangas* and other musical instruments. All the while the Bhagavan could be seen at his best, singing, dancing with joy and frequently lost in that blessed state of ecstasy or *samadhi*. When the singing of devotional hymns and the spiritual excitement which came with it were over, the company present would be treated by the Bhagavan to one of those celestial conversations, so laden with sermons for the spiritual welfare of humanity, which no one could ever forget who had the rare privilege of listening to him.

The first part of the day was given to *sankirtan* (singing forth the name of the Lord). They were singing the songs relating to the separation of the Gopis from the Lord Sri Krishna who had gone to Mathura. In the course of the songs, the Bhagavan was frequently in a state of *samadhi*. They were singing. Suddenly he rose to his feet, saying: "O my friend, do thou bring my beloved Krishna to me or take me over to the place where he is". The Bhagavan, it would appear, had merged his personality in that of Radha, the chief of the Gopis. He realized that he and Radha were one. Uttering those words he became speechless and stood motionless, with half-closed eyes evidently having lost all sense-consciousness. Coming to himself, he cried out in a voice that drew tears from the eyes of those who heard him: "O my friend, do me this favour and

I shall be thy most devoted servant. Remember it was thou who inspired my love for the beloved".

The chorus went on singing. Radha was made in the song to say: "Oh! I will not go to the bank of the Jamuna to draw water, for while passing under the Kadamba tree I am reminded of my beloved Krishna and am overwhelmed. Ramakrishna, heaving a sigh, said: 'Ah, me!' As the chorus chanted aloud the name of the Lord, the Bhagavan was again on his feet and in *samadhi*. Recovering his sense-consciousness, he could only repeat inarticulately: 'Kitma, Kitma', for 'Krishna, Krishna'.

The *sankirtan* was brought to a close by the Bhagavan himself leading the chorus and repeating 'Victory to Radha, victory to Govinda[1]', and dancing with his disciples, who formed a circle around him.

The Madness of Love for the Lord

The dancing and singing had all taken place in the reception-hall. The Bhagavan then withdrew into one of the adjoining rooms to the west. To a disciple he said, with regard to the Gopis: "How wonderful was their devotion! At the sight of the Tamal tree they were seized with the very madness of love.

Disciple: "This was also the case with Chaitanya. Looking at the forest that was before him he thought it was Brindavan, the sacred birthplace of Sri Krishna!"

The Bhagavan: "Oh! if any one is but favoured with the slightest touch of this ecstatic love! What devotion! What intense love! Of this devotion they not only had the full measure, a hundred per cent, but a great deal more than that. This is called the madness of divine love. The only thing is to have intense love and sincere and earnest longing for God. On whatever path you may travel, whether you believe in Divinity with or without form, whether you have faith in God-Incarnate in a human form or not,—if you have intense love and sincere longing for Him, you are sure to attain to Him. He alone knows what He is like. He Himself will make you realize His divine nature. Why should you be mad after the

[1] *'Jaya Radha, jaya Govinda'.*

things of the world? If you must be mad, be mad for God. There is a madness of divine love, a madness of *bhakti*, or ecstacy, and a madness of *jnana*. Radha had the madness of divine love. Hanuman showed the madness of true devotion. When Sita was forced by Rama to prove her chastity by going through the ordeal of fire, Hanuman, although a devotee of Rama, was so maddened that he wished to kill his Lord, the Divine Incarnation. I saw a true Jnani, who wandered like a mad man. He came to the temple-garden. He had so realized the oneness of the Spirit in every living creature that when he saw a dog eating the remains of a dish, he held him by the ear and said: 'Brother, wilt thou eat all?' He then took a portion and ate with the dog. He said to Hridaya: 'When the holy water of the Ganges and the water of the gutter appear to be the same, then will come the realization of Divine oneness'.

"At one time I had this madness. I used to walk like a mad man, seeing the same Spirit everywhere and recognizing neither high nor low in caste or creed. I could eat even with a Pariah. I had the constant realization that the Brahman is Truth and the world is unreal like a dream. Once Mathura Babu took me in a boat. The Mohammedan crew were cooking and I was about to eat with them, but Mathura Babu would not let me. In that state I used to bow down before everybody and would ask them to repeat the holy name of the Lord. As in a violent storm a screen of dust rises, hiding the trees of different kinds and making all trees appear alike, so in that storm of spiritual vision I could not distinguish one man from another as high or low".

A DEVOTEE: "Bhagavan, how can a man live in the world and experience any of these kinds of madness?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "These states are not for those who are living in the world and performing the duties of the world, but for those who have absolutely renounced internally and externally. External renunciation is not for those who live in the world. They should practise internal renunciation or mental non-attachment".[2]

(To a disciple) "A man brought a bottle of wine; I went to touch it but could not".

[2] Sri Ramakrishna says that mental or internal non-attachment is the real *vairagya*.

DISCIPLE: "Why, Bhagavan ?"

DIVINE INTOXICATION

RAMAKRISHNA: "When Divine Bliss is attained, one becomes intoxicated with it, he does not need to drink wine. When I see the feet of my Divine Mother, I feel as intoxicated as if I had drunk five bottles of wine. In this state one cannot eat anything and everything".

DISCIPLE: "As regards eating, one should eat what one gets".

FOOD FOR A BHAKTA

RAMAKRISHNA: "That depends upon the spiritual state. In the path of *jnana* that produces no harm; when a Jnani eats, he pours the food as an offering in the fire of the Kundalini. But for a Bhakta it is different. A Bhakta should eat only pure food, such food as he can freely offer to his beloved Lord. Animal food is not for a Bhakta. But at the same time, I must say, if a man loves God after eating the flesh of a pig, he is blessed, and wretched is the man who lives on milk and rice, but whose mind is absorbed in lust and gold. Once I took as *mantram* the name of Allah from a Mohammedan teacher and repeated the name for several days and ate their food".

(2)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA then came back into the hall followed by his disciples and seated himself. A pillow was placed for him to recline upon. Before touching it, he said; *om tat sat* (Brahman is the only Reality). 'The pillow was, of course, one which had been used by the unholy men of the world, and the Bhagavan was purity itself. It was getting late, but no dinner was being served and the Bhagavan became a little impatient like a child. Surendra, the host was a beloved disciple of the Lord. The Bhagavan said: "Surendra's disposition has grown admirable. He is very generous; those who go to him for help never come away disappointed. Then he is very outspoken. He is bold enough to speak the truth".

TRUTHFULNESS

"In this age truthfulness is the best of all ascetic practices. He who is firm in truthfulness, attains to God. Lack of truthfulness destroys all virtue. For this reason, when I say anything even inadvertently, such as, I shall go there, I shall do that, I must go, because I have said it. I may lose my firmness in truthfulness if I do not keep my word to the very letter. Openness as opposed to dissimulation is the fruit of the practice of many religious austerities in one's previous incarnations. In a well-known song by Tulsi Das[3] it is said: 'Give up dissimulation and cunning'. Do you not see that whenever God has taken a human form, this great virtue of guilelessness has never failed to come to view? Look at Dasaratha, the father of Rama, and Nanda Ghosh, the father of Sri Krishna. They were both free from guile. (To a young disciple) Like men of the world, you have accepted a position in an office, but I know you are working there for your mother. Otherwise I should have said: 'For shame! For shame!' You must serve only the Lord. (To Mani Mullick) This young man is open and guileless to a degree; only nowadays he occasionally tells untruths, that is all. The other day he said that he would come to see me, but he did not. (To Mahendra) You went to see Bhagavan Das; how did you like him?"

MAHENDRA: "Yes, revered sir, I went to see him. The great Vaishnava sage has become very old. He was lying down when I went to see him; a disciple put some food into his mouth. He can hear only when addressed in loud tones. After hearing thy name, he said to me: "You need not fear anything. Ramakrishna is a Divine manifestation. To worship his name is to worship God".

Here Mahimacharan came in and the Bhagavan exclaimed: "This is a visit quite unexpected! We expect at most a shallop in this poor river of ours, yet here comes a ship! But now it is the rainy season!"

[3] Tulsi Das was a great Hindu poet who lived between 1544 and 1624 A.D. He was a devoted worshipper of Rama. His Hindi poem, *Ramayana*, or the History of Rama, as well as proverbs and other verses, are to this day household words in every town and rural district where the Hindi language is spoken. He is regarded by the people as a Hindu saint of the Vaishnava sect.

The conversation next turned on the spiritual aspect of feasts and the Bhagavan said to Mahima: "Why is it that people are fed at a feast? Do you not think that it is the same as offering a sacrifice to God who is the living Fire in all creatures? But bad men not God-fearing, guilty of adultery and fornication, should on no account be entertained at a feast. Their sins are so great that several cubits of earth beneath the place where they eat become polluted".

(3)

Protap Chunder Mozoomdar[4], a member of the Brahmo Samaj, entered and saluted Sri Ramakrishna. The Bhagavan, as usual, returned his salutation with his well-known modesty, bowing very low. Mozoomdar said: "Revered sir, I have recently been to Darjeeling".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "But you do not seem to be better off after the change. What is the matter with you?"

MOZOOMDAR: "The same complaint to which Keshab Chandra Sen succumbed".

EGOTISM RISES FROM IGNORANCE

The conversation then went on about a certain Mahratta lady who had been to England and had embraced Christianity. Mozoomdar asked the Bhagavan whether he had ever heard of the woman. The Bhagavan replied: "No, but from what I hear from you, I should think she must be a person who wishes to make a name for herself. Egotism of this kind is not good. Those who seek for fame are under a delusion. 'I do this or that', this sense arises from ignorance. But 'O Lord, Thou art doing everything' is true knowledge. God is the real Actor, others are actors in name only'.

[4] Protap Chunder Mozoomdar was well-known in America as Mr. Mozoomdar. He was a co-worker of Keshab Chandra Sen and became a leader of the New Dispensation sect of the Brahmo Samaj. He came to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 A.D. and delivered addresses in many principal cities in America. He was the author of the Oriental Christ. In 1879 he wrote his celebrated article on *Ramakrishna*, which was published in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* of India; and which was incorporated in *My Master* by Swami Vivekananda.

The Ego of a Calf

"The calf says: *'hamma'* or *'aham'* (I). Now look at the troubles caused by the self which says 'I, I'. In the first place, the calf is sometimes taken into the field where it is yoked to the plough. It is there made to work on from morning till evening, alike in the sun and in the rain. Its troubles are not yet over. It is very often killed by the butchers. Its flesh is eaten as meat. Its skin is tanned into hides which are then made into shoes. The sufferings of the calf in this state know no bounds. But that is not all. Drums are made with the skin which is thus mercilessly beaten, sometimes with the hand and sometimes with the drumstick. It is only when out of its entrails are made strings for the bows used for carding cotton that the troubles of the poor creature are over. And that is because it no longer says, *hamma, hamma* (I, I), but *tuhum, tuhum* (It is Thou, O Lord ! It is Thou !). Similarly, when *jiva* (ego) says, 'O Lord! Not I but Thou art the doer and actor, I am merely an instrument in Thine hands', it becomes free from all the troubles of the world and attains to absolute freedom from birth and rebirth in this world of sorrow and suffering".

A Devotee: "How can *jiva* become free from egoism (*ahamkara*) ?"

Bhagavan: "Egoism does not leave until one has realized God. If anyone has become absolutely free from egoism (*ahamkara*) you must know that that person has seen and realized Divinity".

Devotee: "Revered sir, what are the signs of one who has seen and realized God ?"

Signs of One Who has Realized God

Bhagavan: "The signs of one who has seen God are thus described in Bhagavatam. They are four kinds. First, his conduct is like that of a child. A truly wise man who has seen the Lord becomes like a child. A child has no real egoism. He is not bound by any custom. The self of the child is nothing at all like the self of the grown-up man. The second sign is that one who has seen God does not care for his body or his dress. Purity and impurity seem to him the same. Third, such a one

sometimes acts like a mad man, now laughing, now weeping, and the next moment talking to himself; now dressed like a Babu (gentleman) and now taking his one garment under his arm and going quite naked like a child. Lastly, he may remain inert and motionless for a long time in the state of *samadhi*".

DEVOTEE: "After God-vision does egoism (*ahamkara*) disappear entirely?"

BHAGAVAN: "Sometimes the Lord wipes out the last stain of egoism, as in the state of *samadhi*. Again, sometimes He leaves a faint trace of egoism, but that is harmless. It is like that of an innocent child, who knows not how to do harm to anybody. The steel sword is turned into gold by the touch of the Philosopher's stone. It still retains its shape but it does not injure anyone".

THE BHAGAVAN to Mozoomdar: "You have been to England and America. Tell me all about what you saw there".

MOZOOMDAR: "Sir, people in England mostly worship what thou callest *kanchan* (gold), but there are some good men and women who are not so attached to worldliness. Generally speaking, one sees nothing but worldly activity (*rajas*) everywhere from beginning to end".

ATTACHMENT TO WORK

BHAGAVAN: "I have seen the same thing here too. Why in England and America alone? Attachment to work is to be found in every country. That worldly activity is the first chapter of life. So long as the *rajas* quality predominates, attachment to work increases. One cares more for one's own wordly good—riches, honour, fame etc. It gradually leads to ignorance which makes one forget God, the Absolute Reality of the universe. God cannot be realized until the *sattva* qualities, such as devotion, right discrimination, dispassion and compassion for all, prevail. All attachment to lust and gold proceeds from *rajas* and *tamas* qualities, but work cannot be renounced entirely. Propelled by nature (*Prakriti*) you plunge into work even against your wish[1]. Therefore I say you should work with

[1] The *Bhagavad Gita*, III. 27.

non-attachment in other words, you should work without seeking the fruits thereof.

"In a great religious ceremony we give alms to the poor and do various other charitable works and may think that we are absolutely unattached to the results of such works, but in the end we find that the desire for name and fame has crept up in the mind, we do not know how. But he alone who has seen and realized God can become absolutely unattached to work and its result".

A DEVOTEE: "What is the path for those who have not realized God ? Is it necessary for them to give up all work and worldly activity ?"

PATH OF DEVOTION

RAMAKRISHNA: "In this age (*kali-yuga*) the path of devotion and love (Bhakti Yoga) is easy for all. The practice of Narada's *bhakti* is better adapted to this *yuga*. One should repeat the holy name of the Lord and chant His praises and with earnest and sincere heart, pray to Him, saying: 'O Lord, grant me Thy Divine wisdom, Thy Divine love. Do Thou open my eyes and make me realize Thee'.

"When Karma Yoga is so difficult to practise, one should pray to the Lord in this manner: 'O Lord! Do Thou reduce our *karma* to a minimum, and the little work that we daily perform, may we do it with non-attachment by Thy grace. O Lord! Do not let our desire for work increase in number and bind us to the ties of the world' ".

IS WORK THE AIM OF LIFE ?

DEVOTEE: "People of the West (in England and America) always say, 'Work, work, work'. Is not work (*karma*) then the end and aim of life ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "The end and aim of life is the attainment of God. Work is nothing but the first chapter of life; how can it be its end and aim ? But work, without seeking the result, is a means, not the end".

ATTAINMENT OF GOD-VISION

"No one, however, can avoid work. Every mental action is a *karma*. 'I am thinking', 'I meditate', 'I feel', each of these is a *karma*. The more one attains to true devotion the less becomes one's worldly work. The pleasures of the world do not satisfy such a soul. They lose their charm. How can one who has tasted the *sarvat* made with pure crystallized sugar, be pleased with the taste of a drink made with molasses or treacle? On one occasion a Karma Yogi (Sambhu) said to me: 'May thy blessings be upon me so that my wealth be spent in good and charitable works, namely in building hospitals and dispensaries, in making roads, in sinking wells for travellers, in establishing schools, colleges, etc'. Whereupon I replied: 'Sambhu, all these works are good when they are performed with non-attachment. But that is very difficult. In any case you should always keep in mind that the aim of your human existence is the attainment of God and not hospitals and dispensaries. Suppose the Lord appears before you and graciously offers to fulfil your desires. Will you then pray for dispensaries and hospitals, tanks and wells, roads and *serais*, or will you say: 'O Lord! grant that I may have pure and unalloyed love for Thee and unswerving devotion to Thy feet, that I may always feel Thy presence and realize Thee under all conditions?' Hospitals, dispensaries and all these things are transitory; God alone is the Reality, all else is unreal. Once placed face to face with the divine vision we see them as no better than dreams and then we pray for more light, more wisdom, more divine love, the love which lifts a man to God, the love which makes us realize that we are really sons of the Supreme Being, of whom all that can be said is that He exists, that He is Knowledge itself in the highest sense, and that He is the Eternal Fountain of love and bliss. Again, when one attains to God-vision, one feels that God alone is the real Actor in the universe, the Doer of all things, and that we can do nothing. If God does everything, then why, instead of realizing Him, shall we get entangled in the meshes of worldly works? First realize God; then, if it be His will, many hospitals and dispensaries may be established. Therefore, I say, never lose sight of this goal of life that I have pointed out for you, but move onward through the practices of devotion and love. When you have advanced far enough you will know that God

alone is the Reality, that all the things of the world are unreal and that the highest aim of life is the attainment of God".

Parable of a Wood-Cutter

"There was a wood-cutter who led a very miserable life with the small means he could procure by daily selling a load of wood brought from a neighbouring forest. Once a Sannyasin, who was passing by that way, saw him at work and advised him to go further into the forest, saying: 'Move onward, my child, move onward'. The wood-cutter obeyed the injunction and proceeded onward until he came to a sandalwood-forest, and being much pleased he took away with him as many sandal logs as he could carry, sold them in the market and derived much profit. Then he was wondering within himself that the good Sannyasin had not told him anything about the wood of the sandal-tree, but had simply advised him to move onward. So the next day he went on beyond the place of the sandalwood until he came upon a copper-mine and he took with him all the copper that he could carry, and selling it in the market, got more money by it. Next day, without stopping at the copper-mine, he proceeded further still, as the *Sadhu* had advised him to do, and he came upon a silver-mine and took with him as much of it as he could carry, sold it and got even more money and so daily proceeding further and further he found gold-mines and diamond-mines and at last became exceedingly rich. Such is also the case with the man who aspires after true knowledge. If he does not stop in his progress after attaining a few extraordinary and super-natural powers, he at last becomes really rich in the eternal knowledge of Truth.

"So go on, my children and never lose sight of your ideal. Go onward and never stop until you have reached the goal. Arriving at a particular stage do not get the idea that you have reached your journey's end. Work is only the first stage of the journey. Bear in mind that doing unattached works is exceedingly difficult, that therefore Bhakti Yoga, the paith of love, is better suited to this age, and that work, even if unattached, is not the end of your life, but only a means to an end. So march on and never halt till you have come up to the great Ideal of your life—the realization of God".

Lectures and Sermons of Preachers

Referring to the lectures given by the members of religious bodies like the Brahmo Samaj and Harisabha[2], the Bhagavan said: "One can form an estimate of a man from the lectures he delivers. A Pandit was lecturing as the preceptor (Acharya) of a certain Harisabha. In the course of his sermon he said: 'The Lord has not *rasa* (sweetness). Let us make Him sweet by giving Him our love and divotion.' By sweetness he meant love and tenderness".

Story of a Boy and the Cowshed

"It reminded me of the story in which a boy was trying to convince his friends that his uncle had a great many horses by saying that he had a whole cow-shed full of horses. Of course any intelligent person could at once see that a cow-shed was not the same as a stable and that horses are never kept in a cow-shed. What would people think after hearing such absurd statements ? They would laugh and come to the conclusion that the uncle had no horses at all. See how absurd it is to say that God is devoid of sweetness, when He is the Fountain-head of all sweet and tender qualities".

Then turning to Mozoomdar the Bhagavan said: "You are an educated and intelligent man, and a deep thinker. Keshab and yourself were like the brothers Gour[3] (Chaitanya) and Nitai[4]. You have had enough of this world—enough of lectures, controversies, schisms and the rest. Do you still care for them ? Now, it is high time for you to collect your scattered mind and turn it towards God. Plunge into the ocean of Divinity".

Mozoomdar: "Yes, revered sir, that I ought to do. There is no doubt about it. But all this I do simply to preserve Keshab's name and reputation".

Story of a Man and His Cottage

Ramakrishna (smiling): "You believe that you are doing all this, as you say, for Keshab, but after a while this idea will

[2] Harisabha is an orthodox Hindu religious society.

[3] Gour is the abbreviated form of Gouranga, another name of Chaitanya.

[4] Nitai is also the abbreviated form of Nityananda, the most powerful preacher among the followers of Chaitanya. He is regarded by the Vaishnavas of this sect as the spiritual brother of Chaitanya.

change and you will think differently. Let me tell you a story. A man built a cottage on a mountain-top. It cost him hard labour and much money. After a few days there arose a cyclone and the cottage began to rock to and fro. He was very anxious to save it, so he prayed to the Wind-god, saying: 'Lord, I beseech thee, do not destroy this cottage'; but the Wind-god did not listen. He prayed again, but the cottage kept on rocking. Then he thought out a plan to save it. He remembered that in the mythology Hanuman was the son of the Wind-god. Instantly he cried out: 'Lord, I beg of thee, spare this cottage for it belongs to Hanuman, thy son'. But the Wind-god did not listen. Then he said: 'Lord, I pray thee, spare this cottage, for it belongs to Hanuman's lord, Rama'. Still the Wind-god did not listen. Then, as the cottage was about to topple over, the man, to save his life, ran out of it and began to swear, saying: 'Let it go to destruction! What is that to me?' You may now be anxious to preserve Keshab's name; but console yourself with the thought that it was after all owing to God's will that the religious movement connected with his name was set on foot, and that if the movement has had its day, it is also owing to that same Divine will. Therefore dive deep into the sea". Then the Bhagavan began to sing:

1. Dive deep, dive deep, dive deep, O my mind! into the sea of Beauty.
   Make a search in the regions lower, still lower below the bottom of the sea:
   Thou wilt surely find the jewel of *prema* (intense love of God).
2. Within thy heart is Brindavan (the abode of the God of love).
   Search, search, search; searching Thou wilt find it.
   Then in the heart shall burn, burn, burn the lamp of wisdom without ceasing.
3. Who is it that steers the boat on land, on land, on land?
   Says KUVIR: Listen, listen, meditate on the lotus feet of thy *Guru*.

"Do you hear the song? You have finished your lectures, quarrels and fights. Now dive in this ocean. There is no fear of death in this sea. It is the sea of Immortality. Do not fear

that one becomes unbalanced by meditating on God. I once said to Narendra ((Vivekananda)—"

MOZOOMDAR (interrupting): "Who is this Narendra ?"

GOD, THE SEA OF IMMORTALITY

THE BHAGAVAN: "Oh, there is a young man of that name. Well, I said to Narendra: 'God is like a sea of immortal syrup. Would you not dive deep into this sea? Suppose, my boy, there is a basin containing the syrup of sugar and that you are a fly anxious to drink the sweet liquid. Where would you sit and drink ?' Narendra said in reply: 'Why! from the edge of the basin. If I go far from the edge I may be drowned and lose my life'. Thereupon I said to him: 'My boy, in the sea of Divinity there is no fear of the kind. Do you not know that it is the sea of Immortality ? Whosoever dives into this sea does not die but obtains ever-lasting life'. He who is mad after God can never become unbalanced or insane".

WORK WITHOUT DEVOTION

"Work without devotion (*bhakti*) to God has in this age no ground to stand upon. First cultivate devotion (*bhakti*); all other things—schools, dispensaries, and charitable works shall, if you wish, be added unto you. First devotion, then work".

IDEAL OF A WET-NURSE

Mozoomdar made inquiries about the disciples. He asked whether those who came to the Bhagavan were getting better in the spirit day by day. The Bhagavan said: "I place before them the ideal of a wet-nurse for teaching them how to live in this world. The maid-servant referring to her master's house says: 'This is our house'. All the while she knows that her home is far away in a distant village, to which her thoughts are always fixed. Again, referring to the master's child in her arms, she will say: 'My Hari has grown very wicked', or 'My Hari likes to eat this or that', and so on. But all the while she knows that Hari is not her own. I tell those who come to me to live a life unattached like this maid-servant. I tell them to live un-

attached in this world, to be in the world but not of the world, and at the same time to have their mind directed to God, the heavenly home from whence all come. I tell them to pray for love of God (*bhakti*), which will help them so to live".

Agnosticism in Europe and America

After a short time the conversation turned on the agnosticism of Europe and America, and Mozoomdar said: "Whatever people in the West may profess to be, none of them, as it seems to me, is an atheist at heart. The European thinkers all admit an unknown power behind the universe".

The Bhagavan: "How can they be atheists when they believe in Sakti, the eternal Energy?"

Mozoomdar: "They also admit the moral government of the universe".

As Mozoomdar rose to take leave, the Bhagavan said to him: "What shall I say? It is better that you cease to have anything to do with all those things—schisms, controversies, etc. All quarrels and disputes spring from egotism and attachment to the world. These keep men away from God. Therefore abandon all earthly attachment and fix your mind on the Almighty".

Compassion and Attachment

Mozoomdar then saluted the Bhagavan and withdrew. After he had gone, a devotee asked: "Revered sir, thou didst go to see Vidyasagara, what dost thou think of him?"

Ramakrishna: "Vidyasagara is a very learned scholar (Pandit). He is kind and charitable, but he has no spiritual consciousness. There is gold inside; if he had been aware of it, he could not have devoted so much of his time to external work. Eventually his work would have been finished. If he knew that God was dwelling within his heart, his mind would have been fixed in thinking and meditating on Him. Some people have to perform work without attachment for a long time before true dispassion for the world comes; then the mind runs towards God and becomes absorbed in Him. Whatever

work Vidyasagara has done for others has been very good and helpful. To be kind and compassionate is also good; but there is a difference between compassion and attachment. Compassion is the result of the *sattva* quality. The *sattva* Attachment is love for wife, children, brother, sister, father, mother and other relatives, while true compassion is equal love for all living creatures".

MAHENDRA: "Is compassion also a bondage?"

SATTVA, RAJAS, AND TAMAS

RAMAKRISHNA: "This question is not for ordinary mortals. Compassion is the result of the *sattva* quality. The *sattva* quality is protective, the *rajas* quality is creative, and *tamas* is destructive; but Brahman, the Absolute, is beyond these three qualities,—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.* It is also beyond Prakriti or nature. Where there is Absolute Reality, no quality of nature can reach. As a thief cannot go to the exact spot where the treasure is, because he is afraid of being caught, so *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas,* like thieves, cannot go to the realm where is the treasure of the Absolute".

PARABLE OF THE THREE ROBBERS
THREE GUNAS OF NATURE

RAMAKRISHNA continued: "A man was going through the woods. On his way he was caught by a band of three robbers. They took away everything he had. Then the first robber asked: 'What is the use of keeping this man alive?' And drawing his sword, he was about to kill him, when the second robber stopped him saying: 'What good will be done by killing him? Tie his hands and feet and throw him to one side'. So they bound his hands and feet and went away leaving him by the roadside. After they had gone for a while, the third robber returned and said to him: 'Ah! are you hurt? Come, let me untie the cords and release you'. Then when he had removed the cords, he said: 'Now come with me. I will show you the road'. After walking for a long distance, they found the road, and then the robber said: 'Look here, there is your home. Follow the road and you will soon reach it'. The man, thanking him, replied: 'Sir, you have done me a great service. I am greatly obliged

to you. Will you not come with me to my house ?' The robber answered: 'No, I cannot go there ; the guard would find me out'. This world is the wilderness. The three robbers are the three *gunas* of nature,—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas,* and *Jiva* or the individual soul is the traveller ; self-knowledge is the treasure. The *tamas* quality tries to destroy the *jiva,* the *rajas* quality binds him with the fetters of the world, but the *sattva* quality protects him from the actions of *rajas* and *tamas.* By taking refuge with the *sattva* quality, *jiva* becomes free from lust and anger, which are effects of *tamas ;* the *sattva* quality also emancipates the *jiva* or the individual soul from the bondage of the world. But *sattva* quality itself is also a robber. It cannot give Divine Wisdom, or the knowledge of the Absolute. It leads one, however, upto the path of the Supreme abode and then it says: 'Behold, there is thy home!' Then it disappears. Even the *sattva* quality cannot go near the abode of the Absolute."

About the Absolute Nothing Can be Told
Parable of the Four Travellers

"What the Absolute is, no one can tell. He who has attained the Absolute, cannot give any information about it. Four travellers discovered a place enclosed by a high wall, with no opening anywhere. They were very anxious to see what was inside. So one of them climbed up to the top of the wall and as he looked in, he shouted with amazement and joy: 'ha! ha! ha!' and without giving any information to his fellow-travellers, he jumped inside. The others did likewise. Whoever climbs up to the top of the wall, jumps inside with extreme joy and never comes back to give the news of what he has found. Such is the realm of the Absolute. The great souls (*mahatmans*) who have realized the Absolute have not come back, because after attaining the highest knowledge of Brahman, one absolutely loses the sense of 'I' (*aham*). The mind ceases to be active and all sense-consciousness vanishes. This state is called the *Brahmajnana* or Divine wisdom".

A Devotee: "Revered sir, did not the perfected soul Sukadeva attain to the *Brahmajnana,* the knowledge of the Absolute ?"

Ramakrishna: "Some say that Sukadeva saw the ocean of the Absolute Brahman and touched its water, but he did not

go into the water; therefore he was able to come back and teach mankind. Others believe that he attained to the Absolute Brahman and then returned to help humanity".

DEVOTEE: "Does sectarianism exist after the knowledge of the Absolute (*Brahmajnana*) has been attained?"

SECTARIANISM AND BRAHMAJNANA

RAMAKRISHNA: "I was once talking with Keshab Sen about this *Brahmajnana*. Keshab asked me to say more about the Absolute. I replied: 'If I say more, your sect and creed will vanish'. Keshab answered: 'Revered sir, then I do not wish to hear more'. Still, I said to Keshab: *'I, me and mine,* these are ignorance; I am the doer, 'I am the actor'. 'This is my wife, these are my children, my property, wealth, and fame', all these arise from ignorance'. Keshab replied: 'Revered sir, nothing will be left, if the sense of 'I' be abandoned'. I answered: 'Keshab, I do not ask you to abandon the whole of the sense of 'I'; but leave out the unripe 'I'—'I am the doer', 'my wife, my children, I am the teacher', abandoning this sense of 'I', retain the ripe 'I'—'I am His servant, I am His devotee', 'I am not the doer, but He is the Actor' ".

THE UNRIPE AND RIPE "I"
KESHAB AND HIS DISCIPLES

DEVOTEE: "Can the ripe 'I' make a sect?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "I said to Keshab: 'I am the leader of a sect, I have founded a sect, I am teaching others,' all these proceed from the sense of the unripe 'I'. Therefore I asked Keshab to abandon this 'I'. I also said to him: 'You talk of your sect, but see many members of your sect have resigned'. Keshab replied: 'Revered sir, after remaining for three years under my instructions, they have now joined another sect, and at the time of leaving, they criticized and slandered me'. I said to him: 'You do not understand the inner nature of your disciples. You must study their predominant traits and must not make disciples indiscriminately' ".

RAMA BABU[1]: "Bhagavan, I do not see what good has

[1] Rama Babu whose full name was Rama Chandra Dutt was a devoted householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He was a scientist and a teacher of chemistry in the Medical College of Calcutta. He was a good speaker and writer.

been done by the New Dispensation of Keshab Sen. If Keshab himself had realized God, the condition of his disciples and followers would have been different. In my opinion he has had no realization".

A Spiritual Leader Must Renounce the World
Why God Cannot be Seen

Sri Ramakrishna: "Oh yes, he must have some realization; otherwise why should so many people honour and respect him? Why do they not honour and respect the leaders of other branches of the Brahmo Samaj in the same way? Without Divine Will no one can command such respect from the mass. A man cannot become a true spiritual leader unless he practises absolute renunciation. Without this people will have no faith in him. They will say: 'This man is worldly. He himself enjoys the pleasures of flesh and wealth, yet he tells that God is Truth while the world is unreal like a dream'. The world will not receive his teachings unless he has renounced everything. A few people may listen to him and follow him. Keshab Sen was in the world and had his mind on worldly things. He tried to support his family by giving lectures and by marrying his daughter to a prince, thus protecting his worldly relations and social position. Once Keshab asked me: 'Why can I not see God?' I answered: 'Because you have directed your whole attention and energy in seeking of honour and respect of people, and to other worldly matters. So long as the child is absorbed in playing with its dolls, the mother remains busy with her household works. But when the child throws away the doll and cries for the mother, the mother cannot stay away'. You think that you are a leader, but the Divine Mother thinks: 'My child believes that he has become a leader and is happy; let him remain contented according to his belief'."

The Absolute and the Divine Mother

"I also told him to believe the Divine Mother (*Mahamaya*) as one with the Absolute Brahman. The Divine Mother is the Eternal Energy. They are inseparable. They appear as separate

so long as we are conscious of the body and as we try to describe them by words. Eventually Keshab believed in the Divine Mother. Once he came with his disciples to see me. I asked him to deliver a lecture, so he did and after it I had a long talk with him".

God, His Devotee and His Word One

"I said: "He who is the personal God manifests in one form as His devotee and in another form as His Word'. Then I told him: 'You are living in the realm of *maya* (*avidya*). This *maya* does not let anyone know God. It keeps all in ignorance".

Delusive Power of Maya
Vishnu as a Pig

"How wonderful is its power! It entangles even a divine incarnation and makes him suffer from hunger, thirst, sorrow, misery, like an ordinary mortal. Do you not see how Rama, the divine Incarnation, suffered for Sita? How with great sorrow, he wept bitterly when Sita was stolen away from him? In the Hindu mythology there is a story that Vishnu incarnated in the form of a pig to destroy the demons; but after destroying the demons, he did not care to return to the heaven. He wanted to live as a pig. He had some little ones and he was happy with them. The *Devas* of the heaven thought: 'How is it that our Lord does not come back? What has happened?' Then they went to Siva and asked Him to persuade Vishnu to return to His heaven. Siva came and entreated him, but he was busy with his young ones and paid no heed. Then Siva tore open his body with His trident and freed him from his self-delusion. Vishnu then laughed and returned to His heavenly abode. Such is the power of *maya*. To go beyond its realm and rise above the *gunas* (qualities) is extremely difficult. He who has attained to God has transcended *maya* with its changing and enchanting qualities".

CHAPTER IX

VISIT TO A HINDU PUNDIT AND PREACHER

(1)

ABESHA OF RAMAKRISHNA

It was the day of the great car festival of Jagannath. The streets of Calcutta were crowded with people. Boys and girls were playing along the way and amusing themselves by blowing horns and pipes made of palm-leaves. It was drizzling and the roads were wet and muddy. About four o'clock in the afternoon the Bhagavan came out of Ishan's house and entered a carriage which was waiting for him at the door. Immediately after taking his seat he lost sense-consciousness and went into that state of pure Godconsciousness which he had often called his *abesha*. The disciples followed their divine Master on foot, for they were eager to be present at this memorable meeting with Pandit Sasadhar[2], the great preacher of the Vedanta philosophy and religion.

The Pandit was visiting a friend in Calcutta. As the carriage of Sri Ramakrishna drew up at the entrance-door, he was warmly welcomed by the host and his people. Coming upstairs the Bhagavan met Sasadhar advancing towards him. He appeared to be a middle-aged man with a fair complexion and around his neck was thrown a rosary of *rudraksha* beads. He came forward with a reverential air, saluted the Bhagavan, and led him to the parlour which was intended for his reception. The disciples and others went in after him and seated themselves as near him as they could. Among the disciples present was Narendra. The Bhagavan, smiling in his semiconscious

[1] Ishan Chandra Mookerjee was a pious Brahmin householder. He regarded Sri Ramakrishna as the Incarnation of Divine wisdom.

[2] Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramani was a Sanskrit scholar of great renown and an eloquent preacher of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta. By his powerful speeches he succeeded in checking the materialistic tendency of the Hindu students of Bengal. He also gave rational explanations of the rituals and ceremonies described in the Hindu scriptures.

state, said: "Very good, very good! Well, what kind of lectures do you deliver ?"

SASADHAR: "Revered sir, I try to explain the truth taught by the holy scriptures".

BHAGAVAN: "Bhakti Yoga, communion with God by love, devotion and self-surrender, as practised by the Rishi Narada, is enjoined for this age. There is hardly time for Karma Yoga, as expounded by the scriptures. Do you not see that the well-known decoction of the ten medicinal roots (*dasamula-pachan*) is not the medicine for fevers of the present day ? The patient is seen to die before the medicine has had time to take effect. 'Fever-mixture' is, therefore, the new effective remedy of the day. Teach them *karma* if you like, leaving aside the unnecessary rituals. I tell people not to bother with the long ritual of *sandhya,* but to repeat only the short *gayatri*".[3]

EFFECT OF LECTURES ON WORLDLY MEN

"Give thousand of lectures, but you cannot do anything with the worldly men. Can you drive nail into a stone wall ? The head will be broken without making any impression on the wall. Strike the back of an alligator with a sword, it will receive no impression. The mendicant's bowl (of gourd-shell) may have been to the four great holy places of India but still may be as bitter as ever. But you will learn this truth gradually. A calf cannot stand on its legs all at once. It falls down, gets up, falls again, and then it learns to stand and run. You do not know who is a Bhakta (godly) and who is worldly; but that is not your fault. When a heavy storm blows, one cannot distinguish a tamarind from a mango tree.

"It is true, however, that no one can absolutely renounce all works without realizing God. The question is, how long should *sandhya* (rituals) and other ceremonial works be practised ? So long as the holy name of the Lord does not bring tears of love to the eyes and produce horripilation (*romancha*) in

[3] *Gayatri* is the most sacred and the most universally used of all vedic prayers among the Hindus. It is a Sanskrit *mantram* or formula which means: 'Let us meditate on that glorious self-effulgent light of the divine sun; may He enlighten our *buddhi* or understanding'. This is still the daily prayer of all the Hindus of the upper three castes.

the body. When you are uttering 'Om Rama', if tears of love come down from your eyes, you will know for certain that the period of your *karma* (works and duties) is over. You are no longer obliged to perform *sandhya* and other works. You have risen above *karma*. When the fruit appears, the blossom drops off. The true *bhakti* is the fruit while work is the blossom.

"When the daughter-in-law of the house is with child, she cannot do much work; so the mother-in-law daily reduces the number of her duties. As the time of her delivery draws near, the mother-in-law seldom allows her to do anything; and when the child is born, she takes charge of the child and ceases to attend other work".

All Rituals and Samadhi

"*Sandhya* merges into *gayatri, gayatri* into OM, and OM ultimately loses itself in *samadhi*. As the sound of a bell—*ding, dong*—gradually fades away into the Infinite, so the soul of a Yogi gradually rises with the *nada* (the sound of OM) and becomes merged in the absolute Brahman in *samadhi* and into this *samadhi* eventually enter all kinds of *karma—sandhya, gayatri* and other works. In this manner the Jnanis are freed from all rituals and religious exercises".

(2)

As the Bhagavan was talking of *samadhi*, a strange heavenly expression came over his sweet radiant face. He lost all outward consciousness. After remaining speechless in this state for some time, he came down and like a child said: "Give me a little water". This call for water was the usual sign of his return to the plane of sense-consciousness. Then he murmured: "O Mother! The other day Thou didst show me Vidyasagara. Then I desired to see another Pandit and Thou hast brought me here".

The Necessity of Practice

Then turning to Sasadhar, the Bhagavan said: "My friend, add to your spiritual strength, go through devotional exercises

a little longer. You have not yet climbed up the tree, how can you expect to lay your hands upon its fruits? But you are doing all this for the good of others".

Saying this the Bhagavan bowed to Sasadhar and continued: "When I first heard your name, I inquired whether this Pandit was merely an ordinary Pandit or one who had attained right discrimination (*viveka*) and dispassion (*vairagya*). He is not a true Pandit who does not possess right discrimination".

The Divinely-Commissioned Teacher

"If there has been a commission (*adesha*) from the Supreme, then there is no harm in teaching others. Such a Divinely-commissioned teacher is invincible. No one can defeat him. If one single ray from the Goddess of wisdom falls upon a man, it brings him such power that before him the greatest Pandits appear to be small and insignificant like worms of the earth. When a lamp is lighted, swarms of moths rush towards it without waiting to be called. So he who has received a Divine commission, does not seek followers or make known the time of his lectures. His own power of attraction is so great that people of their own accord crowd around him. Then kings and nobles flock to him saying: 'We have brought mangoes, sweets, money, jewels and shawls; of these what will you accept?' To such people I say: 'Take them away, I do not want any of them'.

"Does a magnet ever say to the iron, 'come to me?' No; drawn by the magnet, it goes of itself. Such a man may not be a Pandit, still he does not think for a moment that he lacks in knowledge. Is true wisdom acquired by reading books? There is no end to the wisdom of one who has received a Divine commission. That wisdom comes from God and, therefore, it is endless. In our country in measuring grain, one man weighs and the other pushes small heaps of grains towards him. In like manner when the Divinely-commissioned teacher gives instruction, my Mother, standing behind, pushes towards him heaps of Divine wisdom and the supply is never exhausted. When the gracious look of the Divine Mother falls upon one, can there be any lack of wisdom? Therefore I ask whether you have received any commission (*adesha*) from the Lord?"

HAZRA (to the Pandit): "Oh! I dare say he must have received something of that kind. Is it not so?"

SASADHAR'S HOST: "He has not obtained *adesha*, but he is lecturing only from a sense of duty".

VALUE OF LECTURES WITHOUT DIVINE COMMISSION
BADGE OF AUTHORITY

THE BHAGAVAN: "If a man has received no Divine commission, what good will his lectures do? In the course of his lecture a Brahmo said: 'Brethren, I used to drink, I used to do this and that'. Hearing this the people began to talk: 'What does this fellow say? He used to drink!' Thus this statement produced just the opposite effect in the minds of the audience. Unless the speaker be a good spiritual man, his lectures do not help mankind in any way. A sub-judge once said to me: 'Sir, you begin to preach, then I will also be ready'. I answered: 'My friend, listen. There was a large pond in a certain village. Some people used to throw dirt around the edge of the water and otherwise defile the pond. Good men of the village spoke to the offenders and entreated them, but could not produce the slightest impression upon their minds. The offenders continued to violate the sanitary laws. Every morning abuses were showered upon their heads, but all in vain. At last when the municipal authorities put up a notice forbidding everyone to commit such acts and sent peon with their badge to punish the offenders, from that moment nobody ventured to throw dirt near the pond'. Therefore I say a badge of authority is necessary; otherwise no one will listen to your words. A true speaker is one who is authorized by the Supreme and who holds the badge of Divine commission. Every man and woman must obey and bow down to him.

"A true teacher of mankind must possess great spiritual power (Sakti). In Calcutta there are many veteran wrestlers. One must try one's strength on such men and not on novices in wrestling. Chaitanya Deva was an *Avatara*. Tell me how much of that which even he did is now followed and practised by the people? What good will be done by the lectures of one who does not hold the badge of Divine authority? Therefore I say: 'You must first take refuge in the holy feet of the Almighty'".

(3)

"There are infinite ways which lead to the sea of Immortality. The main object is to fall into that sea; it matters not how one gets there. Suppose there is a reservoir of nectar, a single drop of which falling into the mouth will make one immortal. You may drink it either by jumping into the reservoir or by slowly walking down along its slope. The result will be the same even if you are pushed or thrown into it by another. Taste a little of that nectar and become immortal".

Different Paths to God

"Innumerable are the paths: *yoga, jnana, karma, bhakti* are all paths which lead to the same goal. If you have intense longing you will surely reach God. Yoga (communion with God) is of four kinds: Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga".

Jnana Yoga

"Jnana Yoga is a communion with God by means of right discrimination and knowledge in its highest sense. The object of a Jnani is to know and realize the Absolute. He discriminates between the absolute Reality and the unreal phenomena by saying; 'Not this', 'Not this' (*neti neti*), until he comes to a point where all discrimination between the Real and the unreal ceases and the Absolute Brahman is realized in *samadhi*".

Karma Yoga

"Karma Yoga is a communion with God by means of work. It is what you are teaching. The performance of duties by house-holders, not for the sake of obtaining their result but for glorifying the Supreme, is that which is meant by this method of Yoga. Again, worship, repetition of the name of the Lord, and other devotional exercises are also included in it, if they are done without attachment to their fruits but for the glorification of God. The end of Karma Yoga is the same as the realization of the Impersonal Absolute or the personal God or both".

Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga leads to this communion through concentration and meditation. It has eight steps. The first is *yama,* which consists in non-injuring, truthfulness, non-covetousness, chastity, and the non-receiving of gifts. The second is *niyama,* which includes austerities, forbearance, contentment, faith in the Supreme Being, charity, study, and self-surrender to the Supreme Will. The practice of various physical postures is comprised in *asana,* the third; while *pranayama* (or breathing exercises) constitutes the fourth step. The fifth is *pratyahara* and consists in making the mind introspective and one-pointed. Concentration or *dharana* is the next; *dhyana* or meditation is the seventh, and *samadhi* or the state of superconsciousness, the eighth".

Bhakti Yoga

"Bhakti Yoga is a communion by means of love, devotion, and self-surrender (*bhakti*). It is especially adapted to this age.

"The path of absolute knowledge is exceedingly difficult. The term of human life at the present day is short and entirely dependent on material food. Moreover, it is almost impossible to get rid of the idea that the soul is produced by the body. Now, a Jnani or philosopher may declare: 'I am not this body, gross or subtle; I am one with the Brahman, the Absolute. I am not subject to the necessities and conditions of the body,—hunger, thirst, birth, death, disease, grief, pleasure, pain etc.'. Such assertions, however, will not make him free from these bodily conditions so long as he is on the plane of relativity. He may be compared to a person who is suffering from the intense pain of a wound but who is trying to deny it by mere words of mouth.

"When the *Kundalini* is awakened, true *bhakti,* Divine love and ecstasy are attained. Through Raja Yoga one can easily attain to various psychic powers. But when Karma Yoga leads to Bhakti Yoga, Divine realization comes. Then all duties, rituals, ceremonials, drop off like the petals of a flower as they drop off when the fruits grow. When a child is born, the young mother does not discharge any other duties, but

fondles and caresses the child all the time. As she is free from all household duties, so a Bhakta becomes free from the bondage of work after realizing God. The true Bhakta says: "O Mother, *karma* with attachment I fear, for it proceeds from selfish motives, and as a man soweth so shall he reap. I see again that work without attachment is exceedingly difficult. If I work through attachment, I shall forget Thee; therefore I do not desire such *karma*. Grant that my work may become less and less so long as I do not attain to Thee. Till then may I have strength to do unattached the little work that is left for me, and may I be blessed with unselfish love and devotion to Thee! Mother, so long as I do not realize Thee may my mind be not attached to new works and new desires! But when Thou wilt command me to work I shall do it not for myself but only for Thee".

Hatha Yoga

A Devotee: "Revered sir, what is Hatha Yoga?"

Ramakrishna: "Hatha Yoga deals entirely with the physical body. It describes the methods by which the internal organs can be purified and perfect health can be acquired. It teaches how to conquer the various powers of *prana* and the muscles, organs and nerves of the body. But in Hatha Yoga the mind must always be concentrated on the physical body. A Hatha Yogi possesses many powers, such as levitation; but all these powers are only the manifestations of physical *prana*. There was a juggler who in the midst of his tricks suddenly turned his tongue upward and drew it back into the post-nasal canal, stopping respiration. Instantly all the activities of his body were suspended. People thought that he was dead, so they buried him. For several years he remained buried in that state. In some way the grave was opened and he regained consciousness. Immediately he began to repeat the same conjuring words which he had been uttering before he lost consciousness. So the practice of Hatha Yoga will bring one control over the body, but it will carry one only thus far and no further. Raja Yoga, on the contrary, deals with the mind and leads to spiritual results through discrimination, concentration and meditation".

Concentration

"Perfect concentration of the mind is necessary in the path of Raja Yoga. Mind is like the flame of a lamp. When the wind of desire blows, it becomes restless; when there is no wind, it is steady. The latter is the state of the mind in Yoga. Ordinarily the mind is scattered, one portion here, another portion there. It is necessary to collect the scattered mind and direct it towards one point. If you want a whole piece of cloth, you will have to pay the full price for it. Yoga is not possible if there be the least obstacle in the way. If there be a small break in the telegraphic wire, the message will not reach its destination. A Yogi controls his mind, but the mind does not control him. When the mind is absolutely concentrated, the breath stops, and the soul enters into *samadhi*".

Kumbhaka

"This kind of suspension (*nirodha*) of breath is called *kumbhaka*. It can be attained through *bhakti* Yoga also. When the emotion (*bhakti*) reaches its climax, the breath stops and the mind becomes fixed. If a man is sweeping and some one comes and tells him: 'Mr. So and so is dead; have you heard it?' The sweeper, if the dead man be not his relation, will exclaim unconcernedly: 'Is that so? Is he dead? He was a good man. I am sorry'; but he goes on sweeping. If, however, he hears of the death of a dear relative, he is so stunned that the broom drops from his hand and he sinks to the ground crying out, 'God help me!' At this time his breath stops, his mind is fixed upon his grief and he cannot think of anything else. Again, have you not seen among women how, when one of them is struck with wonder either by seeing or hearing something unexpectedly, her breath stops, her mind becomes fixed and the body remains motionless?"

Meditation

"At the time of true meditation the body becomes absolutely motionless like a statue and senses become inactive. When I first saw Keshab Sen in the Adi (original) Brahmo Samaj, I saw him sitting in meditation withdrawn from the external

world and his body was perfectly motionless like the stump of a tree; then I said to Mathura Babu: 'This man is trying to hook the fish which is nearby'. Meditation is possible even with eyes wide open, even when one is conversing with another. Suppose you have a toothache. You may perform all works, but your mind will remain concentrated on the spot where the pain is. Similarly, if you have true concentration on God, your mind will remain fixed even when your body is moving or you are speaking. I used to close my eyes at the time of meditation. Then I thought: 'If God exist after closing the eyes, why should He not exist while the eyes are open?' I opened my eyes and saw the Divine Being everywhere. Men, animals, insects, trees, creepers, moon, sun, water, earth—in and through all these the infinite Being is manifesting Himself. He who meditates upon God for a long time gets Divine grace in his soul. Through him flow Divine powers. A great singer, or one who is perfect in instrumental music or in any other art or science, also possesses a portion of Divine power. This is the doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'Wherever there are signs of greatness, there is the manifestation of Divine power".

What Happens after Death

A Devotee: "Revered sir, what happens after death ?"

Ramakrishna: "Keshab Sen asked me the same question. So long as a man remains in ignorance, in other words so long as he has not realized God he will be subject to rebirth; but after Divine realization one does not come back to this earth, nor is he born in any other world. Potters after making earthen pots dry them in the sun. Have you not seen that there are pots which are baked in fire and others that are unbaked? When a pot of unbaked clay is broken, the potter uses the same clay to make a new pot; but if a baked pot is broken, the pieces are of no further use and he throws them away. Similarly, when the ego is not baked in the fire of wisdom, after death it will appear in another form and be born again and again. If a fried grain is planted, it will not germinate; in the same manner, he whose inner nature is fried in the fire of wisdom is no longer subject to evolution, but attains to absolute freedom from rebirth".

Dualistic and Monistic Vedanta

"In the *Puranas,* the doctrine of dualistic Vedanta prevails, which teaches that the *jiva* (the individual soul) is one thing and God is another; 'I am distinct and separate from you'. This body is like a bowl; mind, intellect and egoism are like water within it, while the personal God is the sun which is reflected in the water; and this reflection or image of the Divine Being can be perceived by the *jiva* in ecstasy. In monistic Vedanta, however, the Brahman, the Absolute, is the Reality and all else is unreal like a dream. Egoism (*ahamkara*) is like a stick dipped into the waters of the Infinite Ocean of Existence-Intelligence-Bliss, and makes it appear as divided; but when the stick is removed, the apparent division ceases and the waters of the ocean remain undivided. The knowledge of this indivisible oneness brings the highest state of *samadhi,* where this egoism is entirely obliterated. But the great spiritual teachers like Sankaracharya[1] kept a little egoism of knowledge to teach mankind".

The Signs of a True Jnani

"A true Jnani, or knower of the Absolute, may be recognized by certain signs. A real Jnani does harm to no one. His nature becomes like that of an innocent child. As a burnt rope retains its shape and appears from a distance like a real rope, but, in truth, a breath can blow it away, so the egoism of a Jnani is merely apparent. A child has no attachment for anything. It may build a toy-house; if anyone touches it, it cries; but the next moment the child will break it to pieces. So a true Jnani lives in the world, but remains unattached. He may possess things of great value, but he has no attachment for them. In monistic Vedanta, the waking state is no more real

[1] Sankaracharya was the greatest exponent of the Vedanta philosophy in India. He lived about the beginning of the eighth century of the Christian era. His commentaries on the *Upanishads,* the *Vedantasutras,* and on the *Bhagavad Gita* have shown the profound depth of his philosophical reasoning. He became a Sannyasin when he was eight years old. He wrote his famous commentaries in Sanskrit at the age of twelve and finished his literary work when he was sixteen years old. Then for sixteen years he preached monistic Vedanta, and established monastic orders and monasteries in the four corners of India. He finished his glorious and eventful career when he reached the age of thirty-two. He is regarded in India as the Incarnation of Siva and the embodiment of Divine wisdom.

than the dream state. A woodcutter was dreaming a happy dream, but being suddenly awakened by some one, he explained with annoyance: 'Why did you awaken me ? I was a king and the father of seven children. My children were all receiving education in various sciences. I was seated on the throne and ruling over my country. Why did you destroy so happy and delightful a state ? The man replied: 'Oh! It was only a dream. What does it matter ?' The wood-cutter said: 'Get away, you fool! You do not understand that my dream of being a king was as real as my so-called present awakened state. If it be true that I am a wood-cutter, then it is equally true that I was a king' ".

JNANA AND VIJNANA

"*Jnana* is to know the *Atman* through the path of discrimination, 'not this, not this'. When this discrimination leads to *samadhi*, then only the *Atman* can be apprehended. But *vijnana* is complete knowledge or realization. Some have heard of milk, some have seen it, but others have tasted it. So with God. Those who have heard of Him are still in ignorance ; those who have seen Him, are the Jnanis, but those who have tasted or realized Him are the Vijnanis. After seeing God, when one makes acquaintance with Him and realizes Him as the nearest and dearest of all, then that is *vijnana*. At first it is necessary to discriminate 'not this, not this', that is, God is not the elements of nature, He is not the senses or sense-powers, He is not this mind, not this intellect, not this egoism ; He is beyond all the categories of nature. To go to the roof, one must climb step by step, leaving one step after another. The staircase is not the same as the roof. After reaching the roof, however, one can easily see that both roof and staircase are of the same material. The same infinite Brahman appears as the personal God, *jiva*, and the twentyfour categories (*chaturvimshati tattvas*) of Nature. You may ask why this earth is so hard and solid, if it has come out of the Brahman. His omnipotence can make everything possible".

(4)

RAMAKRISHNA (to Gopal, the old devotee, Swami Advaitananda): "What! Do you still wish to visit holy places ?"

GOPAL: "Yes Bhagavan, I would like to travel a little more".

PARABLE OF THE BIRD ON THE MAST

RAMA BABU (to Gopal): "The Bhagavan says, after making pilgrimage to many places one should settle down in one spot. This he explains by the parable of the bird on a ship's mast. A bird was perching on the mast of a vessel as it sailed out to sea. After a long time the bird realized that there were no trees around or land in sight. He flew towards the north to find land, but being disappointed, he returned to the mast, rested a while and flew towards the south. Still finding no shore, he came back again, tired and exhausted. In the same manner he went in all directions, but finding nothing but water and water everywhere, he at last rested on the mast and became content".

PARABLE OF A MAN SEEKING A LIGHT

RAMAKRISHNA: "So long as God seems to be outside, in different places, there is ignorance But when God is realized within, then comes true knowledge. A man woke up at midnight and desired to smoke. He wanted a light, so he went to a neighbour's house and knocked at the door. Someone opened the door and asked him what he wanted. The man said: 'I wish to smoke. Can you give me a light?' The neighbour replied: 'What is the matter with you? You have taken so much trouble and awakened us at this hour, when in your hand you have a lighted lantern'. What a man wants is already with him; but he still wanders here and there in search of it".

RAMA BABU: "Bhagavan, now I have understood why a *Guru* asks his disciple to visit holy places,—it is to give him an opportunity to learn by experience and to increase his faith in his teachings".

PANDIT: "Revered sir, how far did your holiness go on pilgrimages?"

Pilgrimages

Ramakrishna (smiling): "Well, I went to some places. Hazra went farther and higher up, to Hrishikesha[1] in the Himalayas. I did not go so far or so high up. The vulture and the kite soar very high, but their eyes are all the while directed to the charnel-pits below. Do not know what the charnel-pits are? Lust and gold. If in going on a pilgrimage a man does not acquire *bhakti* then his pilgrimage is fruitless; for *bhakti* is the end of all; it is the only thing needful.

"Do you know who are the vulture and the kite? They are those who talk on lofty subjects and say: 'We have performed most of the works enjoined in the holy scriptures', but whose minds are immersed in worldliness and strongly attached to wealth, name, fame, and sense-pleasures".

Pandit: "Yes, revered sir, that is true. Going on a pilgrimage is like casting aside the precious stone worn on the breast of Vishnu and wandering about in search of other jewels".

Ramakrishna: "Again, you should know that although you may give thousands of instructions, still they will not produce results until the time is ripe. A child before going to sleep says to its mother: 'Mamma dear, awaken me when I shall feel the call of nature'. The mother replied: 'Do not worry about that, my child; thy feeling will awaken thee'. In the same manner one yearns after God when the proper time comes for it".

Three Classes of Religious Teachers

"Physicians can be divided into three classes. First, those who, when called in, look at the patient, feel his pulse, prescribe necessary medicines and then ask the patient to take them. If the patient declines to do so, they do not care. This is the lowest class of physicians. Similarly there are spiritual teachers who do not care to know whether their instructions have been practised or whether they have produced good results in their disciples. There are other physicians who not only ask the

[1] Hrishikesha is a sacred place of pilgrimage on the banks of the holy river Ganges at the foot of the Himalayas.

patient to take the prescribed drug but who reason with him if he refuses to take it. These belong to the second class. Similarly those spiritual teachers who not only instruct their pupils but reason with them and gently persuade them to follow their teachings, are better than those mentioned before. But the best physicians, who belong to the highest class, use force on the patient if he does not listen to their gentle persuasions. They may go so far as to make him swallow the medicine by force if necessary. Similarly the best spiritual masters use force on their disciples to bring them into the path of the Lord. These teachers belong to the highest class".

PANDIT: "Revered sir, if there are such spiritual teachers, like the physicians of the highest class, then why dost thou say that the spiritual awakening cannot come before the time is ripe ?"

FIT VESSELS

THE BHAGAVAN: "Yes it is true ; but suppose the medicine does not get into the stomach. What will the physicians do then ? Even the best of them are quite helpless. To give proper instruction one must first choose fit vessels or aspirants. You do not examine the capabilities of your pupils. But I ask those who come to me: 'Whom have you to take care of ?' Suppose a young man has no father or that his father has left him with debts ; how is it possible for him to surrender his heart and soul to God ? Do you understand my child ?"

PANDIT: "Yes, Bhagavan, I am all attention".

GRACE OF GOD

The conversation then passed to another subject—the grace of God. The Bhagavan said: "Once a number of Sikh soldiers came to the temple. I met them before the temple of the Divine Mother. One of them said: 'God is all-merciful' ".

"I asked: Indeed is it so ? How did you come to know this ?

"Why, sir, is not the Lord feeding and taking care of us ?

"I said: Is that so extraordinary ? God is the father of us all. If the father does not look after his own children, who

will ? Shall outsiders from another neighbourhood come and take care of them ?"

NARENDRA: "Then we should not call Him merciful".

BHAGAVAN: " Am I forbidding you to call Him all-merciful ? What I mean is that the Lord is our nearest and dearest and not like a stranger".

PANDIT: "Priceless are these words".

The Bhagavan here asked for a fresh glass of water. He would not take the one already offered and it was therefore carried away. It appeared that he looked upon it as unfit to be offered to the God in him, being made impure by the touch of some sinful men".

PANDIT (to Hazra): "You who live with the Bhagavan day and night must enjoy the highest Bliss".

BHAGAVAN (smiling): "This day I have had the rare pleasure of looking at the moon of the second lunar night. Do you know why I say the moon of the second lunar night ? Sita said to Ravana: 'Thou art the full moon, and my Ramachandra is the moon of the second lunar night'. Ravana was highly pleased, for he did not understand the meaning. Sita meant to say that the fortune of Ravana had reached its climax like the full moon and that now it must be on the wane ; but the fortune of Ramachandra was like the moon of the second lunar night, which would increase day by day".

Here the Bhagavan rose up to take leave. The Pandit and his friends bowed down before him with great reverence and devotion. He then departed with his disciples.

CHAPTER X

GATHERING OF DISCIPLES AT THE TEMPLE

(1)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA was seated on his seat as usual facing towards north. The western doors of the room in which he lived for many years looked out on the sacred water of the Ganges. Balaram, Rakhal, and other devotees and visitors were seated on a mat spread out on the floor of the room. They were singing hymns to the accompaniment of musical instruments. One of the songs had particular reference to the six lotuses marking different stages of the Yogi's progress towards the union with the Universal Spirit.

SEVEN MENTAL PLANES

At the close of this song the Bhagavan said: "The six lotuses, mentioned in the science of Yoga, correspond to the seven mental planes, mentioned in Vedanta. When the mind is immersed in worldliness, it stays in the lowest lotus at the end of the spine. Sexual desires (*kama*) rise when the mind is in the second lotus, the sexual organ. When it is in the third, the navel, the man seeks the pleasures of the world—eating, drinking, begetting children. In the fourth mental plane, the heart, the man is blessed with the vision of Divine glory and he cries out: 'What is this! What is this!' In the fifth plane, the mind rests in the throat. The devotee talks only on subjects related to God and grows impatient if any other subject comes up in the course of his conversation. In the sixth plane the mind is localized between the eyebrows. The devotee comes face to face with God; only a thin glass-like partition, so to speak, keeps him separate from the Divine Person. To him God is like a light within a lantern, or like a photograph behind a glass frame. He tries to touch the object of his vision, but he cannot. His perception falls short of complete realization, for there is the element of self-consciousness, the sense of 'I' still present at this stage. When the mind enters in the

last or seventh plane, it attains perfect *samadhi*. Then all sense consciousness ceases and Absolute Godconsciousness takes its place. In this state the life of the saint lasts for twenty-one days, after which he passes away. During these days he ceases to take any food. Milk, if poured into his mouth, runs out and never gets into the stomach".

Sages Who have Reached the Seventh Plane

The Bhagavan continued: "Some sages, who have reached the seventh or highest plane and have thus attained to God-consciousness, are pleased to come down from that spiritual height for the good of mankind. They keep the ego of *vidya*, or, in other words, the higher Self. This ego is like a line drawn across a sheet of water. Hanuman was blessed with the vision of God both with form and without form; but he retained the ego of a servant of God. Such was also the case with the wise men like Narada, Sanaka,[2] Sunanda, Sanat Kumara and other *Rishis* of ancient times".

Here the question was asked whether Narada and others were Bhaktas only and not Jnanis. The Bhagavan replied: "Narada and others had attained the highest knowledge (*Brahmajnana*), but still they went on like the murmuring water of the rivulet, talking and singing. This shows that they too kept this ego of knowledge. They were Jnanis (knowers), and they talked and sang the praises of the personal God for the good of others. A steamboat not only reaches its destination itself but also carries numbers of people on board to the same place. Preceptors such as Narada are like steamboats."

Avataras

"The *Avataras*' or Incarnations of God are born with Divine powers and Divine qualities. They can go anywhere and can stay in any plane from the highest to the lowest. They can stand on the top of the house and come down by the stairs to the ground floor and can go back to the roof again. They possess the power both to come down and to return. In a seven-storied palace a stranger can go only to the outer quarters, but

[2] Sanaka, Sunanda, and Sanat Kumara were the three *Rishis* or seers of Truth of ancient India.

the king's own child, the prince of the house, is free to go to every corner".

Avataras and Ordinary Jivas

"As in fireworks there is a kind of flower-pot which sends off one kind of flower for a while, then another kind and next still another, possessing, as it were, an innumerable variety of flowers, so are the *Avataras.* Then there is another kind of flower-pot which when lighted, burns a little and then goes off at once. Similarly ordinary *jivas,* after long practice and devotional exercises go up at once in *samadhi* and do not return. There is another class who may be called eternally free".

Souls Eternally Free

"From their birth they seek after God and do not care for anything of the world. We are told in the fable of a species of birds called *'Homa',* which live so high up in the heavens, and so dearly love those regions that they never condescend to come down to the earth. Even their eggs, which when laid in the sky begin to fall to the earth by the force of gravity, are said to be hatched during their downward course, and the fledglings, finding that they are falling down at once change their course and begin to fly upwards towards their home, drawn thither by instinct. Men such as Sukadeva, Narada, Jesus, Sankaracharya and others are like those birds who even in their boyhood give up all attachment to the things of this world and engage themselves for attainment of the highest knowledge and Divine light. Those who come with the *Avataras,* are either souls who are eternally free or who are born for the last time".

Two Classes of Paramahamsas
Ego of Knowledge

"The holy men (Paramahamsas) may be divided into two classes. First, those who declare the Supreme Being to be the formless One. Trailanga Swami of Banaras belonged to this class. Generally speaking, holy men of this class are comparatively selfish, because they care only for the liberation of their own souls. Those of the second class say that God is with

form as well as formless, and that He manifests Himself to His devotees as a Being with form. Have you ever seen a canal joined with a big river? The canal has sometimes no trace left, being entirely one with the river water. But very often there may be noticed a slight movement in the water of the canal which proves its separateness from the river. Almost the same is the case with the Paramahamsas belonging to the second class. His soul becomes one with the Universal Spirit. Still the ego of knowledge (*vidya*) or a slight trace of individuality is kept to mark his separate existence from the Deity.

"Again, such a holy man may be compared to a jar or pitcher of water. A pitcher filled with water to the brim gives out sound, only when a portion of the water is poured out into another vessel. Similarly these Paramahamsas keep silent except when his water of wisdom is poured out into the soul of the disciple. Thus he retains the ego of knowledge for the purpose of teaching others.

"Again, suppose a person digs a well. He is thirsty and drinks the water of that well. Yet when his thirst is quenched it is not unusual for such a person to keep the digging implements—the hack, the shovel, the spade—for the sake of others who may want them for the same purpose. In the same way a Paramahamsa of the second class, who may have drunk the water of everlasting life and have thus quenched his spiritual thirst, is often anxious to do good to mankind. With this in view he retains the ego of knowledge, the ego of love, and the ego of the preceptor".

Helping Others

"Some persons eat mangoes and then remove all traces of eating by wiping the mouth with a napkin. They care only for their own pleasure. But there are others who let people know that they have eaten mangoes and are willing to share their pleasure with them. Similarly there are Jnanis who enjoy Divine Communion and do not think of speaking about it to others; but it was different with the Gopis of Brindavan. They not only enjoyed communion with Krishna, the God-Incarnate, but were willing to share their happiness with others".

Divine Communion

"Communion with God may be compared to the process of involution. When one communes with the Supreme Being one's personality becomes absolutely united with the Divine personality. This is the state of *samadhi*. Then again, when one returns to the human plane and comes back to the starting-point, one sees that the world and the ego or self are evolved from the same Supreme Being; and that God, man and nature are interrelated, so that if you hold on to one of them you realize the others".

Fire of Bhakti Destroys Sins

"Take His hallowed name with sincere *bhakti* (love), then the mountain of your sins shall disappear like a mountain of cotton-wool when it catches one spark of fire. Worship through fear of hell-fire is intended for beginners".

Then turning to some of the company present who were singing, the Bhagavan said: "Will you sing songs which describe the enjoyment that one gets after God-vision? Rakhal (Swami Brahmananda, one of his young disciples), do you remember the song sung the other day at Nabin Neogi's house, 'Be intoxicated with the joy of the Lord'?"

One of the company then said: "Revered sir, may we be favoured with a song from thee?"

Bhagavan: "What shall I sing? I sing pretty much like yourselves. Very well; when the time comes, I will sing. So saying, he remained silent for a while".

The first song that he then sang was about Sri Chaitanya Deva and Sri Krishna, that is, he sang from the standpoint of the Vaishnavas (dualistic Bhaktas). The last was regarding the Divine Mother.

Song

The Ecstatic Love

1. The waves of the Divine love come dashing against my body. The swell of the sea of love causes the fall of the unrighteous; nay, it drowns the whole universe.

2. I think of diving deep near the bottom of the sea, but the alligator of ecstasy has swallowed me up. Who is there to feel for me and holding me by the hand, drag me out of the water?

Song
The Mother of the Universe, and the Machine of the Human Body

1. What a fine machine of the human body hath the Divine Mother made!
   How wonderful are the sports She is playing through the machine only six feet long!
2. Dwelling within the machine, She holds in Her hand the string that sets it in motion; but the machine thinks: 'I move by my own will,' not knowing who causes it to move.
3. The 'machine' that has realized Her will not have to be born again. She Herself is tied to some machines by the string of *bhakti* (love).

(2)

At the end of the song the Bhagavan was in *samadhi*. His eyes were fixed and half-closed. His pulse and the heart-beat were suspended. Sense-consciousness had left him, giving place to pure Godconsciousness. Returning a little to the semi-conscious state he talked to the Divine Mother, saying: "O Mother! Come down to this plane. Do not put me into trouble, O Mother! Please wait. Everyone shall reap the fruit of one's past *karma*. What else! What shall I say to these people? O Mother!"

Discrimination and Renunciation

Bhagavan continued: "Nothing can be achieved in the path of spirituality without discrimination (between the real and the unreal) and renunciation (non-attachment to riches, honour, sensual pleasures). Renuciation is of many kinds. One kind springs from the acute suffering due to worldly troubles. But the better kind of renunciation arises from the realization

that all worldly pleasures are unreal even when they are within one's reach. Thus, having all, the man renounces everything for the sake of God".

Time Necessary for Religious Awakening

"Everything depends upon time. For all religious awakening we must wait. But in the meantime the precepts of a *Guru*, the spiritual teacher, should be carefully followed, for these precepts will be of great help in time of need. Another reason is that constant hearing of those precepts may gradually remove the evil effects of worldly attachment. As the effects of drunkenness can be removed by making the drunkard drink the water in which the uncooked rice is soaked or washed, so the intoxication of the worldly-minded people can be cured by the constant hearing of the precepts of a holy *Guru*. The number of those who attain Divine wisdom, is very limited. So the *Gita* says: 'Among thousands a few only strive for the realization of God, and among thousands of such seekers after Truth a few succeed in reaching the goal".

World Attachment and Realization

"The more a person is attached to the world, the less is likely to attain Divine wisdom. The less his attachment is, the more is the probability of his getting it. Thus, wisdom may be said to vary directly as non-attachment to the world, its pleasures, its riches, and inversely as attachment to the world".

Stages of Spirituality

"There are different stages of spirituality. First, there is the state of being struck speechless at the thought or realization of the Brahman,—the absolute Existence Knowledge Bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*). This is the utmost point, as regards love of God, that can be reached by ordinary mortals. Second, there is the state of ecstatic love. This is attainable only by a few. They are human beings with extraordinary powers and are also entrusted with a Divine commission. Being heirs to Divine powers and glories, they form a class of their own. To this

class belong the Incarnations of God like Christ, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya and their devotees of the highest order".

Ecstatic Love

"The two characteristics of ecstatic love are, first, the forgetfulness of the external world, and second, the forgetfulness of one's own body which is so dear to one. The first is like the unripe mango, the second is like the ripe mango. Ecstatic love of God is like a string in the hands of the Bhakta which binds God. The devotee holds the Lord under his control, so to speak. The Lord must come to him whenever he prays earnestly for Him. In the Persian book it is written that within flesh are bones, within bones is marrow and within marrow, the last and innermost of all is this ecstatic love. Sri Krishna is called *tribhanga,* that is, the usual posture of his body is bent in three different angles. Now a soft substance alone can take such an angular shape. So this form of Sri Krishna implies that his whole being must have been made very tender by this ecstatic love".

Three States of Consciousness in Ecstasy

Sri Ramakrishna said: "Chaitanya Deva was the Incarnation of Divine love or *bhakti.* He came to teach mankind true *bhakti.* He used to have three states of consciousness in ecstasy. First, consciousness of the gross and subtle body. At this time he would repeat the name of the Lord and sing His praises in *sankirtan.* Second, consciousness of the casual body alone. In this state he would become intoxicated with ecstatic joy, and retaining partial consciousness of the external, he would dance in company with other Bhaktas. Third, consciousness of the Absolute. In this state he would enter into the highest realm of *samadhi,* and rising above all sense-consciousness, his body would remain apparently lifeless. These states correspond to the five sheaths (*koshas*) of the soul in Vedanta. According to Vedanta, the gross body includes the material form which is the outermost sheath and the sheath of *prana,* or the sense-organs and sense-powers. The subtle body includes two sheaths, mental and intellectual. The causal body is the sheath of joyfulness. Beyond these five is the true Self, the Absolute.

When the mind reaches this state, the highest *samadhi* or God-consciousness is the result".

How to Pray

"How to pray is the next question. Let us not pray for things of this world, but pray like Narada. Narada said to Ramachandra: 'O Rama, grant that I may be favoured with *shraddha, bhakti,* love, and self-surrender (*sharanagati*) to thy lotus feet'. 'Be it so', (*tathastu*) said Rama. 'But wilt thou not ask for anything else?' Narada replied: "Lord, may it please thee to grant that I may not be attracted by thy *maya,* which fascinates the creatures of this worlds'. Ramachandra said once more: 'Be it so, Narada; but wilt thou not ask for something else?' Narada replied: 'No, Lord, that is all I pray for'."

Degrees of Knowledge

"*Jnana* (knowledge) varies in degrees and in kind. There is first the knowledge belonging to men of the world or the ordinary mortals. This knowledge is not sufficiently powerful. It may be compared to the light of a lamp which illuminates only the inside of a room. The knowledge of a Bhakta (devotee) is a stronger light and may be compared to the light of the moon which causes to be visible things outside the room as well as those inside of it. But the *jnana* of an Incarnation of God is still more powerful and it may be likened to a yet stronger light—the resplendent glory of the sun. Such light is the illuminator of the moon as well as of the whole world. Nothing is problematic to the divine Incarnation (*Avatara*). He solves the most difficult problems of life and soul as the simplest things in the world. His exposition of the most intricate questions in which humanity is interested is such as a child can follow. He is the sun of Divine knowledge whose light dispels the accumulated ignorance of ages".

Spiritual Knowledge and the Worldly People

"So long as a man is immersed in worldliness, he cannot attain to Divine knowledge and cannot see God. Does muddy

water ever reflect the sun or any surrounding object? Spiritual knowledge is occasionally visible in worldly people, but very seldom. It does not last long. It is like the light of a lamp. No, no, it is like a ray of the sun—as if a ray was coming through a very small hole in the wall. Worldly people repeat the holy name of the Lord, but there is no longing in the heart. They have no persistence. Whether they attain God or not, they do not care. They are bound by *karma* and must reap the results of their works. Is there no remedy for this state, or no hope for the worldly man? Yes, there is. Drop a purifying agent, say a piece of alum, into the muddy water; the water is purified and the impurities settle down at the bottom of the vessel. Discrimination of the real from the unreal phenomenal universe and non-attachment to the world are the two purifying agents. Thus through these two worldly man ceases to be worldly and becomes pure.

"Worldly people have the knowledge of diversity which is the same as ignorance. But true knowledge makes one realize the unity of existence. 'This is gold, that is brass' is ignorance, while 'all is gold' is true knowledge. All differentiation ceases when the true knowledge comes".

Sankara and The Pariah

"Sankara[1] was a great Jnani. He had true Self-knowledge. He realized one Brahman everywhere and in all beings. He recognized no distinction in caste or creed. At one time, however, he had the consciousness of difference. He would differentiate a Pariah from a high-caste Brahmin or a sage. He would not touch a Pariah after bathing in the sacred Ganges. One day a Pariah was carrying animal flesh along the river bank when Sankara was coming from his bath and the Pariah ran towards him. Sankara exclaimed: 'Sirrah, how darest thou touch me?' The Pariah replied: 'Neither hast thou touched me nor have I touched thee. The *Atman* is pure. It is neither body nor the elements of the body. It is far above the twenty-four categories of the universe. Thou art the real *Atman*: so am I. How can I touch thee?' Sankara bowed down before

[1] Sankara, same as Sankaracharya.

the Pariah, and lo! the Pariah transfigured himself into Siva, the Lord of wisdom. At that moment Sankara's spiritual eyes were opened and he realized the absolute oneness of the *Atman*. 'I am pure and spotless *Atman*, eternally free': this is the nature of true Self-knowledge".

Spiritual Practices
Durvasa and The Gopis

"Spiritual practices (*sadhana*) are absolutely necessary for Self-knowledge; but if there be perfect faith, then a little practice will be enough. One must have faith in the words of the *Guru* or spiritual master. *Rishi* Durvasa was about to cross the river Jamuna when the Gopis (cowherdesses) arrived. They also wished to go across, but there was no ferry-boat. They asked Durvasa: 'Lord, what shall we do?' Durvasa replied: 'Do not worry, I will get you across the river; but I am very hungry. Can you give me something to eat?' The Gopis had with them a quantity of milk, cream and fresh butter. He consumed them all. The Gopis then asked: 'What about crossing the river?' Durvasa stood near the edge of the water and prayed: 'O Jamuna! as I have not eaten anything today, by that virtue I ask thee to divide the water, so that we can walk across thy bed and reach he other side.' No sooner did he utter these words than the water parted and the dry bed was laid bare. The Gopis were amazed. They thought: 'How could he say, 'as I have not eaten anything to-day,' when just now he has eaten so much ?' They did not see that this was a proof of firm faith ; that Durvasa had the faith that he did not eat anything, but that the Lord who dwelt wihin him was the real Eater".

Stages of Spiritual Practice

"The first stage of spiritual practice is association with spiritual people, the company of holy men. The second stage is faith in things relating to the Spirit. The third stage is single-minded devotion to one's ideal. The ideal may be one's *Guru*, the spiritual teacher, the impersonal Brahman, the personal God or any of His manifestations. The fourth stage is the state of

being struck speechless at the thought of God. In the fifth stage, the feeling of devotion to God reaches the highest point; it is called *mahabhava*. The devotee sometimes laughs, sometimes weeps like a mad man. He loses all control over his body. This state is not attained by ordinary human beings who have not risen above the plane of senses. It is reached by Incarnations of God who appear in this world for the salvation of mankind. In the sixth stage, *prema* or ecstatic love goes hand in hand with *mahabhava*. It is the most intense love of God and is strictly the highest state of spirituality. The two signs of this stage are the forgetfulness of this world and the forgetfulness of self, which includes one's own body".

Attainment of Knowledge Gradual

After delivering this sermon, the Bhagavan said to his audience that he would be glad to answer any question. But none any asked. So the Bhagavan continued: "Knowledge (*jnana*) cannot be communicated all at once. Its attainment must be gradual. Suppose a fever is of a severe type. The doctor would not give quinine under such circumstances. He knows that such a remedy would do no good. The fever must first leave the patient, which requires time, and then the quinine will take effect. Sometimes the fever subsides without the help of quinine or any other medicine. Precisely the same is the case with the man who seeks for knowledge. To him religious precepts often prove useless so long he is immersed in worldliness. Allow him a certain time for enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, then his attachment to the world will gradually wear off. Till then all religious instructions that may be given to him will be entirely thrown away like pearls before swine. Many people come to me for instructions and I observe how some of them are anxious to listen to my words. But others of the company appear to be restless and impatient in my presence. They whisper to their friends: 'Let us go, let us go. Well, if you wish to stay, we will go to the boat and wait for you there'. Spiritual awakening is very much a quesion of time. The teacher is a mere help".

The meeting then broke up.

(3)

KARMA (PAST ACTIONS)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to a disciple): "The fact is, that all this desire for knowledge or for freedom depends upon one's *karma* in one's previous incarnations".

DISCIPLE: "Yes, Bhagavan, it is so difficult to understand one's self. We see a man only as it appears to us. Behind it he might have a hundred previous births. We walk upon the floor of a house, but we never stop to see how it is made and what various things are beneath it".

The Bhagavan smiled at the disciple and left his seat. He went out into the *verandah* next to the western door of his room and for a time looked on the sun which was sinking rapidly towards the horizon. Then he gazed down upon the holy water of the sacred river before him. A disciple was walking on the embankment of the Ganges. He was watching Balaram and others getting into a boat to return to Calcutta. It being midsummer, the sacred water of the river had broken into waves. The day was drawing to its close; it was past five, the sky was cloudy and the clouds presented a most wonderful sight, especially towards the north. In the foreground was the Panchavati, backed by a line of tall willow trees, with the silvery stream flowing past on their right. In the background were the beautiful dark blue clouds above and the dark stream beneath. The disciple was looking on this charming scene. Suddenly his attention was arrested by the Bhagavan coming from the south in the direction of the Panchavati and the willow trees. As Sri Ramakrishna, smiling like a child of five, came up, the beautiful picture seemed to be more than complete. There was the universe on one side, and on the other the God-man who reflected the universe and saw it in its real nature. The disciple felt that in his presence all knotty problems of life were solved. It was his presence that made everything—men, women and children, trees, flowers, leaves,—the images of gods and every inch of ground in that temple to pulsate with spiritual powers and dance with the joy of the Lord. Yes, he felt truly that it was the God-man before him that had thrown an irresistible charm over everything in that

wonderful place—over every object, divine or human, animate or inanimate. He stood there spell-bound in his presence.

(4)

It was evening. After the usual prayers and other religious exercises were over, there was yet another meeting between the Master and the same disciple. The disciple then asked, referring to the apparently contradictory systems of religious faith among the Hindus: "Bhagavan, is this a contradiction that some among the Hindus hold that Sri Krishna is identical with Kali, the Divine Mother, while others hold that Sri Krishna is the *Atman,* the Absolute, and that Radha is the *Chitsakti,* the self-conscious Power that rules the universe, the Creator, preserver and destroyer, the personal God ?"

God is Infinite

Bhagavan: "The former view is that of the Devi-Purana. Be it so, but there is no contradiction. God is infinite. The Infinite are the forms in which He manifests Himself. The Infinite also are the ways leading to Him".

Disciple: "Oh, I see! The end in view is to get on the roof of the house. The means may be various, as thou hast often said,—a single rope, a bamboo, a wooden ladder, or a staircase".

Grace of God

Bhagavan: "Quite so. That you can understand this so quickly is due to the grace of God. Without His grace doubt is never cleared up. Our attitude towards God should be like that of Hanuman, who said to Ramachandra: 'Lord, I care not for a special time or place for meditation. What only I am concerned with is to meditate upon thee'."

Love of God the One Thing Needful

"Suppose you go into a garden to eat mangoes. Is it necessary for you first to count the number of trees in the garden, which may be many thousands, then the number of branches which may be hundreds of thousands? Certainly not; you

should at once, on the contrary, proceed to eat. In the same way, it is useless to enter into all sorts of discussions and controversies regarding God, which would only cause a waste of time and energy. One's present and most important duty is to love God, to cultivate *bhakti* or devotion."

DISCIPLE: "Bhagavan, I greatly desire that my work in the world should become a little less than now. The pressure of work stands in the way of giving one's whole mind to God; does it not?"

BHAGAVAN: "Oh yes, no doubt that is so; but a wise man may work unattached and then only the work will not do any harm to him".

DISCIPLE: "But that depends upon the possession of an extraordinary power of will derived from the realization of God. First realization of God, then work without attachment. Is it not so Bhagavan?"

POWER OF DESIRE

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "I must say you are right. But as regards your works, it is quite probable that you have desired these things in your previous incarnations. This reminds me of the story narrated in one of the sacred books. It is said that as long Sri Krishna lived in the heart of Radha so long there was no *lila* (the sport that he played in Brindavan). But there arose a desire in his mind to incarnate as a human being and the consequence of this desire was that he appeared in a human form in Brindavan. Such is the power of desire. Your duty now is to pray without ceasing for love of God, so that the bondage of work shall gradually fall off".

DISCIPLE: "Is it, Bhagavan, the duty of a householder to save against the rainy day?"

CAST ALL CARE ON GOD

BHAGAVAN: "Try to follow the precept of *'yadrichchalabha santushtah'* that is, to remain satisfied with things that come naturally without any efforts for their attainment. Do not take so much thought for your future. Cast your cares on God. What do you think, what takes place at the time of my *samadhi*?"

DISCIPLE: "Thy spirit is then in the sixth plane mentioned in the Vedanta; but when thy mind comes to the fifth plane thou beginnest to talk".

BHAGAVAN: "I am only a humble instrument in His hands. He is doing all these things. I do not know anything".

DISCIPLE: "Because of this wonderful self-abnegation all people are drawn to thee. Thou didst say that *maya* is attachment to one's own relatives and friends, but *daya* is love extending to all mankind—even to all creatures. I do not understand the difference. Is not *daya* a feeling which makes a man cling to the world?"

BHAGAVAN: "*Daya* is not a bad feeling. On the contrary it is elevating and leads one Godward. Do you believe in God with form or without form?"

DISCIPLE: "I go so far as the attributes. God has attributes. So far I see clearly enough. But is it not a fact that it is impossible to think of the formless without the help of a form? In any case, we have to go through forms and symbols".

BHAGAVAN (smiling): "You see that I lay stress upon the worship of God with form as eminently favourable for the practice of devotion".

DISCIPLE: "Is Pandit Sasadhar making any progress in this direction—in the culture of *bhakti* or devotion?"

BHAGAVAN: "Yes; but his tendency is in the direction of the path of knowledge. These men belong to a class of their own. They do not see that this way is exceedingly difficult".

RENUNCIATION

"It is sufficient if one can give up the world from the mind. Outward renunciation is not absolutely necessary".

DISCIPLE: "What thou sayest is, as it seems to me, intended for the weak. For the men of the highest class is meant renunciation in the strict sense of the word. They must give up the world not only from their mind but also outwardly".

BHAGAVAN: "You have heard all about renunciation as I have taught it".

DISCIPLE: "Yes, Bhagavan, I understand by renunciation not only the absence of attachment to things of this world but also non-attachment to things of this world *plus* something more. That something is the love of God".

State of God-Vision

BHAGAVAN: "You are right. I am glad that you understand this. God-vision cannot be made clear to others. It may, however, be described to a certain extent. You have no doubt been to the theatre to witness a dramatic performance. Before the performance commences, you must have noticed that the people are very busy talking to one another on a variety of subjects—politics, household affairs, official business. But no sooner does the curtain go up and men, mountains, cottages, rivers are presented to view than all noise ceases, all conversations end and each individual spectator is all attention to the novel scene that is being enacted before him. Pretty much the same is the state of him who is blessed with God-vision".

DISCIPLE: "Ecstatic love of God, as thou hast said this day, is the string with which to bind the God of love. With such love one may be sure of seeing God. But the question is whether such love is within the reach of the householders (*grihasthas*)".

The Bhagavan remained silent.

CHAPTER XI

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AT THE SINTHI BRAHMO-SAMAJ

(1)

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMAKRISHNA had been asked to attend the anniversary meeting of the Brahmo Samaj, which that year was held in the beautiful garden-house of a gentleman named Beni Babu[1] at Sinthi.[2] The morning service was over when the Bhagavan arrived in a carriage with some of his disciples and took his place on a raised seat set apart for him on the *veranda* looking a large quadrangle. Crowds of devotees, followers and members of the Brahmo Samaj, gathered round him in a circle. The prayers, music and other exercises of a devotional nature then continued.

PSYCHIC POWERS

On hearing the music, Sri Ramakrishna went into *samadhi* and remained motionless for sometime. Then regarding his sense-consciousness, he opened his mouth and in low voice began to speak thus: "The realization of God is not the same as psychic power. There are many Yoga powers, but do you remember what Krishna said to Arjuna about them? When you see one who exercises any of these powers, you may know that such a one has not realized God. Because the exercise of these powers requires egotism (*ahamkara*), which is an obstacle in the path of supreme realization".

DANGER OF PSYCHIC POWERS

"There is, indeed, great danger in possessing psychic powers. Tota Puri thus taught me this truth: A *Siddha* (a man who had absolute control over phychic phenomena) was

[1] Beni Babu was a follower of the Brahmo Samaj. He regarded Ramakrishna as the most Divine man of the age.

[2] Sinthi, a village about four miles north of Calcutta.

sitting on the sea-shore. Suddenly there arose a violent storm which caused him a great distress. Desiring to stop it he exclaimed: 'Let this storm cease!' His command was instantly fulfilled. A vessel was passing at a distance with all sails set. As the wind suddenly died away, the vessel capsized and all on board were drowned. The *Siddha* was the cause of this disaster and therefore he had to take the sin of killing so many innocent people. As the result of this terrible sin, he lost his power and after death he had to suffer in purgatory".

The Siddha and the Elephant

"There was another *Siddha* who was very proud of his psychic powers. He was a good man and an ascetic. One day the Lord came to him in the form of a saint and said: 'Revered sir, I have heard that thou possessest wonderful powers'. The good man received him kindly and gave him a seat. At this moment an elephant passed by. The saint asked him: 'Sir, if thou desirest, canst thou kill this elephant?' The *Siddha* replied: 'Yes, it is possible'; and taking a handful of dust he repeated some *mantram* over it and threw it on the elephant. Immediately the animal roared and fell down on the ground in agony and died. Seeing this, the saint exclaimed: 'What a wonderful power thou possessest! Thou hast killed such a huge creature in a moment!' The saint then entreated him, saying: 'Thou must also possess the power to bring him back to life'. The *Siddha* replied: 'Yes, that is also possible?. Again he took a handful of dust, chanted a *mantram,* threw it on the elephant, and lo! the elephant revived and came back to life. The saint was amazed at the sight and again exclaimed: 'How wonderful indeed are thy powers! But let me ask one question. Thou hast killed the elephant and brought him back to life; what hast thou gained? Hast thou realized God?' Thus saying, the saint disappeared".

Desire for Powers Prevents Realization

"Most subtle is the path of spirituality. God cannot be realized so long as there is the least desire for powers in the heart. You cannot thread a needle so long as there are fibres at

the point of the thread. Krishna said to Arjuna: 'Dear friend, if thou wishest to realize me (God) thou must not desire any psychic powers. A man who possesses psychic powers becomes proud and egotistic and forgetful of God. So long as there is egotism, Divine realization does not come' ".

Four Stages of Realization

"There are four different stages in the path of realization. First, that of a beginner, a *pravartaka,* or one who has just begun to worship God. Those who belong to this class wear the sign of their creed, such as the rosary or the mark on the forehead; and they are very particular about the external forms of their sect. The second stage is that of a neophyte or a *sadhaka.* Those of this class are farther advanced. They do not parade their beliefs and do not attach so much importance to external signs. Their worship is internal. They repeat the Lord's name silently, pray without ostentation and feel some longing for God. The third stage is that of a *Siddha.* What is a *Siddha* ? One who is firmly convinced in his heart and soul that God exists, that He does everything, that He is the Omnipotent Being, and who has obtained a first glimpse of Him. The fourth stage is that of a *Siddha* of *Siddhas.* One who has reached this stage has not only seen God but has made acquaintance with Him and has established a definite relation with Him, either that of a son to his father or that of a mother to her child, or that of a friend to a friend or of a brother to a brother, or the relation of a husband to his wife".

Faith and Realization

"To believe that fire is in the wood is faith. This is one thing, but it is another thing to bring that fire out of the wood, to cook something with it, to eat this and to be satisfied afterwards. So to believe that God is in the world or to catch a distant glimpse of Him is one thing; but to come into direct communion with Him, to enjoy His company and taste Divine bliss is another. No one can make a limit to the various aspects of God which a Bhakta can realize. They rise ever higher and higher".

A DEVOTEE: "Bhagavan, why can some attain realization more quickly than others ?"

SUDDEN CONVERSION

RAMAKRISHNA: "It depends upon the *samskaras* or impressions of one's previous lives. Nothing happens suddenly or by accident. A certain man drank an ounce of wine in the morning and began to act like a drunkard. People, seeing him, wondered why he should be drunk after taking one small glass of wine. Hearing them, however, another man replied: 'Because he has been drinking all the night'. There have been many instances of sudden conversion. People living in the midst of wealth and luxury have suddenly renounced the world. Such sudden changes are the results of spiritual impressions acquired in the previous life. In the final incarnation of a *Jiva, sattva* qualities prevail; his heart and soul long for realization, the mind becomes unattached to worldly pleasures and constantly remains fixed upon the supreme Being".

FIRMNESS OF FAITH NECESSARY FOR REALIZATION

"These people here believe in and worship God without form; that is right. (Addressing the Brahmo devotees) Be firm in devotion to one aspect only, either in God with form or without form. Firmness in faith is the first thing necessary for realization. Nothing can be achieved without firmness. If you have firm faith in God with form you will attain to Him; similarly if you firmly believe in an impersonal and formless Deity, you will reach Him also. Candy will taste sweet from whatever side you bite it. But you will have to be firm and you will have to pray to Him with extreme longing. When a worldly man speaks of God, do you know what it seems like to me ? It is just like children quarrelling in their play and taking the name of God in vain ; or like a dandy walking in the garden, stick in hand, who picks a flower and idly exclaims: 'What a beautiful flower God has made!' And even this thinking of God exists only for a moment, like drops of water on a red-hot iron. Firmness in devotion to one aspect is absolutely necessary. Dive deep. Without diving into the ocean no one

can get the treasure. If you float on the surface, you cannot reach it. Learn to love God. Be absorbed in His love. I have heard your prayers and devotional exercises. But why do you speak so much of the phenomena which God has made ? 'O Lord, Thou hast made the sky, the mighty ocean, the moon, the sun, the stars and planets. O Lord, Thou hast made all these, and so on'. Why do you dwell upon these things ? Seeing the beautiful garden of a rich man, everyone will exclaim: 'What a beautiful tree! How handsome are the flowers and large pond with fine fish! What an artistic building! With what rich paintings are the drawing-room decorated!' At the sight of all these everyone is struck with wonder, but how many seek to know the master of the garden ? A few only. Those who seek God with intense longing see Him, make acquaintance with Him, speak with Him, just in the same manner as I am speaking to you. I am telling you the truth when I say that God can be seen. Who will listen to me and who will believe me ?"

God and the Scriptures
Grace of God

Sri Ramakrishna: "Can God be found in the scriptures ? After reading the scriptures, the highest knowledge that one can gain is about the existence of God ; but God does not appear to him who does not dive below the surface. Until then doubts are not removed and Divine knowledge does not come. You may read thousands of volumes, you may repeat verses and hymns by hundreds, but if you cannot dive into the Ocean of Divinity with extreme longing of the soul, you cannot reach God. A scholar may delude the people by his knowledge of the scriptures and by his book-learning, but through these he will not attain to God. Scriptures, books, sciences—what good will they do ? Nothing can be acquired without the grace of the Lord. Yearn after His grace, devote your energy to acquire it and by His grace you will see Him and He will be glad to speak to you".

Sub-Judge: "Revered sir, is He more gracious to some than to others ? In that case He would be partial and unjust".

Differences in Powers

Ramakrishna: "How is that? Is a horse the same thing as an earthen pot? Vidyasagara asked me the same question. He said to me: 'Has God given greater powers to some than to others?' I replied: 'God pervades all living creatures equally. He dwells in me in the same way as He dwells in the smallest ant, but there is a difference in powers. If all human beings were equal in powers, then why have we come to see you, after hearing of you? Is it because you have two horns on your head? No, it is because you are kind, charitable. learned and have many other qualities greater than those in others. It is for this reason that your fame is so great. Do you not know men who alone can defeat a hundred men, and again a man who will run away through fear even from a single person?' If there be no difference in powers, why should people respect Keshab Chandra Sen so much? It is said in the *Gita*: He whom many people respect and honour either for his knowledge or for his musical gifts or for his oratorial powers or for any other reason, in him be assured, there is a special manifestation of Divine power".

A Brahmo Devotee (to Sub-Judge): "Why do you not accept what he says?"

Ramakrishna (to the Brahmo devotee): "What kind of man are you? Do you not know that it is hypocrisy to accept an opinion outwardly without believing it?"

Sub-Judge: "Revered sir, shall we have to renounce the world?"

Worship God in Solitude

Ramakrishna: "No. Why should you renounce? You can attain to God while living in the world; but at first for a few days you will have to live in solitude and worship Him alone. It is necessary to have a quiet place near your house where you can occasionally be alone for hours at a time and yet go home for your meals. Keshab Sen, Protap Mozoomder, and others have told me that they are like Raja Janaka, who lived in the world and yet attained to the highest realization. I replied: 'It is not an easy thing to be like Raja Janaka. Raja Janaka was at first a great ascetic and practised extreme asceticism for

many years. You could be like him if you practised sustained austerities. A man who writes English in an elegant style has not acquired that facility all at once ; he has had to practise for a long time'. I also said to Keshab Sen: Without going into solitude, how can one cure so acute a disease as worldliness ? It is like the worst form of typhoid fever. If you keep bottles of *chutney* and jars of water where a patient is suffering from this fever, he will surely be tempted to eat and drink them and consequently it will be impossible for the best physicians to cure him. Objects of lust are like the bottles of *chutney,* and desire to enjoy is like the thirst after water. Worldly thirst has no end. And so long as the object of thirst is kept within the reach of the patient, how can he be cured ? Therefore I say, withdraw from the place where those objects are and remain in solitude for a time. Then when the disease is cured, you may live in the world without being tempted by it. It is then that you will live like Raja Janaka. But in the first stage you must be very watchful. In solitude steadily practise devotional exercises. When a fig tree is young, it must be protected by hedge, otherwise it may be eaten up by cattle ; but when the trunk has grown thick, the hedge is no longer necessary. You may tie an elephant to it without damaging it. If after practising in solitude you have acquired true *bhakti* (devotion to God) and have gained spiritual strength, then you can go home and live in the world ; nothing shall be able to tempt you".

SUB-JUDGE (with great delight): "Revered sir, these are the most precious teachings. We need to practise in solitude, but we always forget it and think that we have at once become Raja Janaka. It has given me great peace and joy to hear that it is not absolutely necessary to renounce the world and that God can be realized even at home".

RENUNCIATION AND WORLDLY MEN

RAMAKRISHNA: "Renunciation, why should you practise it ? When you have to fight, it is better to do so from within the fort. You will have to fight against the senses, against hunger, thirst and other desires. This fight is easier from within the fort of the world. In this age, our life depends upon material food ; if you cannot get anything to eat for a day, your mind

will be turned away from God. A man once said to his wife: 'I am going to leave the world'. The wife was very practical and replied: 'Why wilt thou wander from house to house for food ? When thou art in need of food, is it nor better to go to one house than to ten or more ?' Why should you renounce ? It is so much more convenient to live in home. You do not have to worry about food. Whenever your body needs anything, you will have it right at hand ; when you are ill, you will have many hands to nurse you. There you have your wife also to look after your comforts. Janaka, Vyasa, Vasishtha and others first attained Godconsciousness and then lived in the world. They had two swords in their hands—one of wisdom and the other of work".

SUB-JUDGE: "Revered sir, how can we know that true wisdom ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "When true wisdom comes God does not appear to be very far. He is no longer there, but here in the heart. He is no longer that but this. He dwells within all. Whoever seeks Him finds Him".

SUB-JUDGE: "I am a sinner ; how can I say that God dwells in me ?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "You always talk of sin and sinners ; this is the Christian doctrine. Have faith in the holy name of the Lord. By the power of faith all sins will be washed away".

SUB-JUDGE: "Revered sir, how can I have such a faith ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "First be devoted to God. You have in one of your songs: 'O Lord, canst Thou be known without devotion, simply by good works and sacrifice ?' You must pray with earnest longing in silence for true devotion and unselfish love for God. Shed tears of repentance until you have acquired these".

A BRAHMO DEVOTEE: "Revered sir, when will they get time to do all these ? They have to work in their offices".

RESIGN ALL TO GOD

RAMAKRISHNA (to Sub-Judge): "Well, resign yourself to the will of the Lord and give power of attorney to Him. If anyone depends entirely upon some good man, does he do any evil to him ? Internally lay upon Him your whole burden and sit

calmly, without anxiety. Whatever He has given you to do, do that. A kitten has no self-reliance. It mews and mews and stays where the mother cat places it. She may put it in a soft bed or on a hard floor of the kitchen; the kitten is always content and depends entirely on the will of the mother".

Householder's Duties

Sub-Judge: "We are householders with certain duties; how long shall we have to perform these?"

Ramakrishna: "Of course you have your duties. You will have to bring up your children, maintain your wife, and save enough for your family after your death. If you did not do this you would be heartless and cruel. Even great sages and Rishis of ancient times performed their duties towards their families with a loving heart. He who is heartless, cruel and unkind is not worthy to be called a man".

Sub-Judge: "How long shall we maintain our children?"

Ramakrishna: "Until they have passed the age of minority. When the young bird is able to take care of itself, the parent bird pecks at it if it tries to come near it".

Sub-Judge: "What is the duty towards the wife?"

God Provides for Those Who have Realized Him

Ramakrishna: "As long as you live you should give her spiritual advice and proper maintenance. If she is faithful, save enough to make her comfortable after your death. But when Godconsciousness comes, no worldly duties can bind you. Then if you do not think of the morrow, God will think for you. If you attain to Godconsciousness He will provide for the support of your family. When a Zaminder dies, leaving a son underage, a guardian manages the estate for the child. These are legal affairs; you understand them all".

Sub-Judge: "Yes, revered sir".

Bijay: "Oh, how great, how wonderful are these words! He who thinks of the Lord with unwavering mind and a heart overflowing with devotion and love for God, is undoubtedly taken care of by the Lord. The Lord carries everything for him like the guardian of the Zaminder's son. Oh, when shall I reach such a state! How blessed are those who have attained it!"

A BRAHMO DEVOTEE: "Revered sir, can true wisdom be acquired in the world ? Can God be realized in this world ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "You are on the fence, you wish to enjoy both God and the world. Of course God can be realized by one who lives in the world".

SIGNS OF TRUE WISDOM

BRAHMO DEVOTEE: What is the sign of one who has attained true wisdom though living in the world ?"

RAMAKRISHNA: "When the repetition of the name of the Lord will bring tears to the eyes, send a thrill through the whole body and make the hair stand on end. The spiritual eye must be opened. It is open when the mind is purified. Then the presence of the Divinity will be realized everywhere and every woman will appear as Divine Mother. Everything is in the mind. The impure mind brings attachment to the world, and the purified mind brings the realization of God. The impure mind of a man becomes attached to a woman. Woman naturally loves man and man naturally loves woman, and from this spring attachment and worldliness".

DIVINE MOTHER IN ALL WOMEN

"Every woman represents divine motherhood. The same Divine Mother appears in all women under various forms. It is said in the scriptures that Narada in prayer thus addressed Rama: 'O Rama, thou art the *Purusha,* thou appearest in the form of all men, and Sita, thy *Prakriti,* appears in the form of all women. Thou art man and Sita is woman. Wherever there is masculine form, it is thy manifestation ; and wherever there is feminine form, it is the manifestation of Sita, the Divine Mother".

ATTACHMENT TO THE BODY

"As long as there is attachment to worldliness, and thirst for objects of lust, so long there is love for the body. As attraction for the world of senses decreases, the mind goes towards the *Atman* or the true Self and the attachment to the physical

body becomes less. When the non-attachment to the world comes, Self-knowledge is attained and the *Atman* stands aloof from the physical body. When an ordinary cocoanut is cut into halves, it is very difficult to separate the kernel from the shell; but when it is dried, the kernel becomes separate from the shell by itself. You can feel it by shaking it. A man who has realized God becomes like the dry cocoanut; his soul becomes separate from his body and all attachment to the body leaves him. He is not affected by the pleasure and pain of the body; he does not seek the comforts of the body; he moves from place to place like an emancipated soul. 'A true devotee of my Divine Mother attains absolute freedom in this life and is eternally blissful'. When you notice that tears flow and thrill comes at the repetition of the name of the Lord, then you may know that attachment to sense-objects has become less and the devotee is on the path of realization. For instance, if the match is dry it will ignite at the moment it is struck; but if it be wet, you can strike it fifty times and yet you cannot get a light. Similarly when the mind is soaked in the water of lust and thirst for worldly objects, Divine enlightenment does not come in it, however hard you may try; it is merely waste of time and labour. But when that water dries up, spiritual illumination comes instantly".

BRAHMO DEVOTEE: "By what method can that water be dried up?"

THE DIVINE MOTHER WILL CURE WORLDLY ATTACHMENT PRIDE AND EGOTISM

RAMAKRISHNA: "Pray to the Divine Mother with an earnest and sincere heart; when you see Her, the water of worldly attachment will dry up. Attachment to lust and wealth will drop off from you. If you can feel Her as your own mother, She will come to you at that very moment. She is not like a God-Mother, but She is your own mother. Go to Her and importunately ask for what you want. An importunate child hangs on its mother's gown and begs a penny to buy a paper kite. The mother may be engaged in talking to other girls and at first she may not wish to give it, saying: 'No, your father has forbidden it. I will speak to him when he comes

home. You will spoil everything if you get a paper kite'. But when the child begins to cry and does not give in, then the mother says to her companions: 'Just wait a minute, let me quiet the child'; she then gets the key to her drawer, opens the money-box, and gives him what he was crying for. Similarly you cry to your Mother and pray to Her, She will surely come to you. (Turning to Sub-Judge) What is the cause of pride and egotism? Do they arise from knowledge or ignorance? Egotism is the quality of *tamas* arising from ignorance. It is a barrier which prevents the soul from seeing God. When it dies, all troubles cease. This body with all its comforts and luxuries will not last long. A drunkard, seeing the image of the Mother Durga beautifully decorated with jewels and costly ornaments, exclaimed: 'Mother, they may decorate Thy image with all these valuable ornaments, but after three days they will take Thy image out and throw it in the Ganges'. So I say to you all, whether you be a judge or any great personage, it is only for a few days. Therefore you must not be proud or egotistic about anything".

Three Classes of Character

"People's character can be divided into three classes, *tamas, rajas* and *sattva*. Those who belong to the first class are egotistic; they sleep too much, eat too much, and anger and passions predominate in them. Those who belong to the second class are too much attached to work. They love nice well-fitting clothes and are very neat and clean; they care for a luxurious, richly furnished house; when they sit and worship God they love to wear costly garments; when they give any thing to charity they make a parade of it. Those who belong to the third class are very quiet, peaceful and unostentatious; they are not particular about their dress; they lead a simple life and are satisfied with their modest living; their needs are small; they do not flatter for selfish ends; they do not worry about their children's dress; they are not anxious for name and fame; they do not care for admiration or adulation of others; they worship God secretly and do not like to make a parade of their charity. This *sattva* quality is the last step of the ladder which leads to the roof of the Divinity. A person

reaching this state is not required to wait long for Godconsciousness. (To Sub-Judge) you said a little while ago that all men were equal, but now you see how they vary".

(2)

Music for a time interrupted the teachings and Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna again went into *samadhi*. The Brahmo devotees sang the *sankirtan*, and when they finished, all those present resumed their seats, Bijay taking his place just in front of Sri Ramakrishna. It was the hour for another Brahmo service at which Bijay, who was the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, was to read from the Vedas and give an address. Before going to the platform, he asked Sri Ramakrishna's permission, saying: 'Bhagavan, grant me thy blessing, then I shall begin the service'.

Egotism and Knowledge

Ramakrishna: "When egotism is gone, everything is accomplished. 'I am lecturing and you are listening', this sense of egotism you must not have. Egotism proceeds from ignorance and not from knowledge. He who is free from egotism attains knowledge. The rain-water gathers in a low place, it runs off from a high place. Similarly the water of wisdom gathers in the humble heart. It is very difficult to be a spiritual leader (Acharya). One easily loses a great deal by it. When many people show honour and respect, ordinary preachers become egotistic and are easily spoiled. They cannot go further. They merely gain a little fame. Perhaps people will say: 'Oh! Bijay Babu is a good speaker or he is very wise', that is all. Never think, 'I am speaking'. I tell my Divine Mother: 'O Mother, I am merely an instrument in Thy hands. Thou doest everything. As Thou guidest me and makest me speak, so shall I speak' ".

Bijay (very humbly): "Please give me thy permission. Without thy permission I cannot begin the service".

Ramakrishna (smiling): "Who am I to permit you? Ask the permission of the Lord. When genuine humility comes, there is no fear".

Bijay repeated his request and Sri Ramakrishna then said: "You can go and begin according to your custom, but keep your mind on God".

Bijay began the service with a prayer to the Divine Mother. After the service was over, he came down from the platform and again sat near Sri Ramakrishna. The Bhagavan said to him: "You prayed to the Divine Mother; that was very good. They say that the mother's attraction towards her child is greater than that of the father. You can urge your mother more strongly than you can your father. You have a stronger claim on anything that belongs to your mother than on anything of the father".

Absolute Brahman and Divine Mother

Bijay: "If the Brahman, the Absolute, be the Divine Mother, then is She with form or without form?"

Ramakrishna: "The Absolute Brahman and the Divine Mother of the universe are one and the same. Where there is no activity of any kind, that is the state of the Absolute Brahman, but where there is evolution and involution, there is the manifestation of the Divine Mother. When the water of the ocean is calm without a wave or ripple, it is like the state of the Absolute. When the water is in motion and with waves, it is the state of the Creative Energy or Divine Mother. So the Divine Mother is both with form (*sakara*) and without form (*nirakara*).

"You have faith in the formless Divinity, therefore you can think of my Mother as formless. When your faith is firm, the Divine Mother will show you how She is. Then you will know that it is not that She is mere the Absolute Existence; She will come to you and speak to you. Have faith and you will get everything. If you have faith in the formless Divinity, you must make that faith as firm as a rock. But do not be dogmatic; you must never dogmatize about God. You must not say that He is like this and not like anything else. You may say: 'I believe in the formless Divinity, but what else He is, is known to Him only. I do not know, I cannot understand'. The small intellect of a man cannot grasp the whole nature of God. A vessel which can hold a pound only, how can it

contain four pounds? If God reveals Himself to one by His grace and makes one understand His nature, then one realizes Him and not until then. The Absolute Brahman and the Divine Mother are one and the same".

BIJAY: "How can we attain to the vision of the Divine Mother and the realization of the Absolute?"

VISION OF THE DIVINE MOTHER AND THE ABSOLUTE

RAMAKRISHNA: "With earnest longing and sincerity pray and cry. When the heart (*chitta* or *antahkarana*) will be purified (*shuddha*), then you will see the vision as in pure water you can see the reflection of the sun. Upon the mirror of the ego of the devotee is to be seen the reflection of the Absolute Mother of the universe with form. But the mirror should be thoroughly polished and clean; if there be a speck of dirt the reflection will not be perfect. When the sun is to be seen on the water of the ego and when there is no other means of getting a view of the real sun, so long the reflected image of the sun should be considered as absolutely real. As long as the ego is real, so long the reflected image of the sun is real, not partially but absolutely. That reflected image of the sun is the Divine Mother. If you wish to reach the Absolute Brahman which is impersonal and without attributes, then start from that reflected image and march towards the real sun. The personal God or the personal Brahman with attributes is the one who listens to prayers. Pray to Him and He will grant the highest wisdom, because the same personal God has the impersonal aspect also, which is the Absolute Brahman. The Divine Energy, which is the Mother of the universe, is another aspect of the same absolute (transcending) Brahman. All these merge into Absolute Oneness. The Mother can give the *Brahmajnana* or the knowledge of the Absolute, as also true devotion and absolute love. God is the internal Ruler of all. Forsaking egotism, resign your will to His will; you will get everything you desire.

BECOME ONE WITH ALL
ALL SECTS OF ONE FAMILY

When you mix with other people, you should love them all, become absolutely one with them. Do not hate any

one. Do not recognize caste or creed. Do not say that this man believes in a personal God, that man believes in an impersonal God; this man worships God with form, that man worships God without form; this man is a Hindu, that one is a Christian or a Mohammedan. Do not condemn them because of their faith and religion. These distinctions exist because God has made different people understand Him in different ways. The difference lies in the nature of the individuals. Knowing this you will mix with all as closely as possible and love them as dearly as you can. Then when you go home, you will enjoy blissful happiness in your soul. Light the candle of Divine wisdom in the secret chamber of your heart. By that light see the face of my Absolute Mother, and by that light you will also see the true nature of your real Self, the *Atman*. When cowherds drive the cattle to a pasture from different quarters, the cows form themselves into one herd as if of the same family; but when they return at night they separate, each going to its own home. So the Bhaktas of different sects and creeds, when they meet, are like members of one family, but when they are by themselves, they show their peculiar beliefs and different creeds".

It was late in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna, accompanied by a few of his devotees, returned to Dakshineswara.

CHAPTER XII

AT THE HOUSE OF BALARAM, A DISCIPLE

(1)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA arrived from Dakshineswara at the house of his disciple Balaram[1] about ten in the morning and had his dinner there. It was this house which the Bhagavan chose to make his chief 'vineyard' on that day. Here he had bound many a devotee by the tie of Divine love. It was here that he had so often sung the name of the Lord and danced with his disciples. It seemed as if another Gouranga had appeared in the house of his disciple Srivasa where his Bhaktas assembled in a fair, as it were, for 'buying and selling of Divine love'.

How great was the master's love for his disciples! There in the temple of Kali alone by himself he often cried like a child to see them. Sleepless at night he would say to the Divine Mother: 'O Mother! deign to draw them into the fold. They are so devoted to Thee! Oh, how I long to see them! Mother, bring them to me or take me to them'. Was this the secret of his coming to Balaram's house so frequently? He declared, indeed to everyone: 'Balaram is a true Bhakta, he daily worships the Lord of the universe. His offerings are therefore always acceptable'. But whenever he came to his house, he would say: 'Go and invite my Narendra and other disciples. Offering food to them is the same as offering it to God Himself. They, indeed, are not ordinary men. They are parts of the Divinity manifest in the flesh'. And many a time had the devotees met there at the *darbara* of the Divinity".

Mahendra, who taught in a neighbouring school, had heard that Sri Ramakrishna was visiting at Balaram's house. So having a little leisure he came about noon to see him. The mid-day dinner was over and the Bhagavan was in the drawing-room resting. His young disciples were seated around him. From time to time he was taking out spices from a small pouch. Mahendra, entering, bowed down and saluted him.

[1] Balaram Basu of Bagbazar.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (affectionately): "Mahendra! You here! Is there no school today?"

MAHENDRA: "I have come directly from the school. I had just now nothing of importance to attend to there".

A DEVOTEE: "No, revered sir, he is playing the part of a truant".

MAHENDRA (to himself): "Ah me! It is as if some invisible force had drawn me to this place".

The Bhagavan then grew more serious and bade them take their seats. He said: "For some time past I have not been able to touch any metal. Can you tell me why it is so? Once when I put my hand on a metal cup, it was hurt as stung by a horned fish and the pain lasted for a long while. I had to use a metal pitcher and I thought that I should be able to carry it by covering it with a towel; but no sooner did I touch it than I had excruciating pain in my hand. Then I prayed to my Divine Mother: 'O Mother! I shall never touch metal again. Do Thou forgive me this time".

(2)

In the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was still seated in Balaram's drawing-room. On his face was a sweet smile, the reflection of which was caught by the faces of the disciples. Girish Ghosh,[2] Suresh Mitra, Balaram, Kaliprasad (Swami Abhedananda), Latoo,[3] Chunilall[4] and many other disciples were present.

RAMAKRISHNA (to Girish): "You would better discuss with Narendra (Vivekananda) about the divine Being and Its attributes and find out what he has to say".

GIRISH: "Narendra says, 'God is Infinite. We cannot

[2] Girish Chandra Ghosh was the greatest Hindu poet, dramatist and actor of modern India. He was the founder and manager of many theatres in Calcutta. He was regarded as the Garrick of India. He translated Shakespeare's Macbeth into Bengali and played the part of the hero with wonderful ability and originality. He was a genius and the most devoted householder disciple of Ramakrishna.

[3] Latoo was another devoted servant of Ramakrishna. Although he was illiterate he reached the height of spiritual ecstasy through his wholehearted service and devotion for his Divine Master. He was one of the Sannyasin disciples of Ramakrishna and was given the name of Swami Adbhutananda.

[4] Babu Chunilal Bose was a householder disciple of Ramakrishna.

even say that all that we hear or see—be it an object or a person—is a part of God. Infinity is indivisible one, then how could it have parts? It cannot be divided' ".

Divine Incarnation

Ramakrishna: "God may be the Infinite or even greater than the Infinite, but by His omnipotent will He can manifest His essence through human form and incarnate Himself among us. Indeed He does incarnate Himself as a human being. How He incarnates we cannot explain by words. One must feel it and realize it. By analogy we can get only a faint idea of it. For instance, if you have touched the horn, leg or udder of a cow, have you not touched the whole cow? But for us, the human beings, milk is the most important thing and that you can get only from the udder, not from any other part of the body. The Incarnation of God is like the udder, through which flows the milk of divine love. In order to give mankind His essence of divine love and *bhakti* the Lord incarnates from time to time in a human form".

Girish: "Narendra says: 'Is it possible to fully comprehend God ? He is the Infinite' ".

Ramakrishna: "That is true. Who can fully comprehend God or even any of His attributes, great or small? Why is it necessary for us to know all His attributes? It is enough if we can see Him and realize Him. Moreover he who has seen His Divine Incarnation has seen God also. Suppose a man goes to the bank of the holy river Ganges and touches the water. He will say: 'I have seen and touched the holy river'. It will not be necessary for him to touch the whole river from its source to the mouth. If I touch your feet, then I have touched your whole body. If you go to the ocean and touch the water, you have touched the whole ocean. As fire is all-pervading but more manifest in burning wood, so God, although He is all-pervading, is more manifest in His incarnation".

Girish (smiling): "I, for my part, am searching after fire. I am eagerly looking for the place where I shall find it".

Seek God in Man

Ramakrishna (smiling): "The element is more manifest in the wood. If you seek the Divine element, you must seek it

in man, for Divinity is more manifest in a human being than elsewhere. Again, if you see a man who is overflowing with divine love, who is mad after God, who is intoxicated by the wine of divine love, in that man you must know, I assure you, that the glory of the Lord is more perceptible. It is true that God dwells everywhere, but His Divine power (Sakti) is more manifest in some places than in others. In the *Avatara* (God-Incarnate) the display of Sakti is very great. In some of these *Avataras* the manifestation of this Divine power is complete and perfect. In fact *Avatara* means the Incarnation of Sakti, the Divine power.

GIRISH: "Narendra says: He is beyond the reach of mind, words and senses".

RAMAKRISHNA: "No, He is beyond the reach of impure mind only, but not of the purified mind. He cannot be apprehended by ordinary intellect, but purified intellect (*buddhi*) can comprehend Him. Mind and intellect become purified when they are absolutely free from attachment to lust and gold (*kamini* and *kanchan*). Then purified mind and purified intellect become one. Indeed God can be realized by the purified mind. Is it not true that the sages and saints have realized Him? They realized the Supreme Spirit in the Self by their True Self".

GIRISH (smiling): "Narendra has been defeated by me in the discussion".

RAMAKRISHNA: "Oh, no; on the contrary he says: 'Girish has such firm faith in the *Avatara* in a human form that I feel that I should say nothing against it' ".

The Bhagavan then expressed his desire to hear a song about the divine Lord Sri Krishna. Balaram's drawing-room was filled with visitors. Everyone watched the Bhagavan, eager to listen to what he would say and to mark what he would do next. Tarapada was invited to sing, and he sang a song describing the sports of the shepherd of men, Sri Krishna.

Suresh Mitra, another disciple was seated at some distance from the Bhagavan. Sri Ramakrishna smiled at him affectionately and pointing to Girish, he said to Suresh: "You talk of wild life which you once lived but here is Girish who excels you on that score".

Suresh (laughing): "That is indeed true, revered sir. He is my Dada (elder brother) in this respect".

GIRISH (to the Bhagavan): "I never paid attention to my studies in my boyhood. How is it, revered sir, that people insist on calling me learned ?"

SCRIPTURES AND REALIZATION

RAMAKRISHNA: "Do you know what I think about learning and the reading of the scriptures ? The books and the sacred scriptures all point out the way to God. Once you know the way, what is the use of books ? Now the time comes for devotional practices in solitude. A person had received a list in which he was asked to send certain articles to his relatives. He was about to order the purchase of those things, when, looking for the list, he found it was missing. He searched for a long time. His people also joined him in his search. At last it was found and his joy knew no bound. With great eagerness he took it up and went through its contents. But after knowing what things were wanted, he threw the list aside and set forth to collect the desired clothes, sweets, fruits etc. How long does one care for such a list ? So long as one does not know its contents. The next step is to put forth one's effort to procure the things. Similarly the sacred books only tell us the means for the realization of God. Having once known them, you should struggle hard to acquire them and reach the goal. What is the use of mere book-learning ? A Pandit may know many sacred texts and sciences, but if his mind is attached to the world, if he enjoys the pleasures of the senses, then he has not realized the spirit of scriptures—he has studied them in vain".

RAMAKRISHNA then said to Girish: "Narendra is a young man of very high order. He is interested in everything—singing, playing on musical instruments on the one hand, and in the study of various branches of knowledge on the other. He possesses the virtues of self-mastery, right discrimination, dispassion and many other qualities. (Aside to a disciple) Just look at Girish's devotion to the Lord and his faith in Him".

NARAN,[5] to the Bhagavan: "Revered sir, shall we not have the pleasure of hearing thee sing ?"

[5] Naran was a young householder disciple of Ramakrishna.

Upon this the Bhagavan chanted the name of the Divine Mother of the universe.

The Beloved Mother of the Universe

1. O my soul, do thou clasp to thy heart my beloved Mother,
   Let thee and me alone have the pleasure of looking on Her;
   Let Her be seen by none else, by none else.
2. Desires—Oh, get out of their way, my soul; let us enjoy Her presence alone.
   Only let us have the tongue for our sole companion to cry out to Her, saying, "Mother, Mother!"
3. There are evil desires, there are those which point to us the path leading to worldliness; Oh! do not let them come near us.
   Let the eye of wisdom that leads Godward keep watch and guard us from evil.

The Bhagavan then sang another song in which he placed himself in the position of the weary and heavy-laden men of the world, bending under the weight of their trials and sufferings:

The Mother and Her Weary Children

1. O Mother! Thou art made of Bliss Ever-lasting, why then is it denied unto me?
2. My soul, O good Mother, knows not anything but the lotus of Thy hallowed feet.
   Why then does the Ruler of Death, the King of Justice, find fault with me? Tell me what answer to make to that dreaded King.
3. It was my heart's desire, O Mother, to repeat Thy sacred name and cross the ocean of death. Not even in my dream had I the least idea that I should be drowned by Thee in the shoreless ocean.
4. Day and night, O Mother, Thou the Consort of Eternity, have I been repeating Thy sacred name, which brings salvation unto Thy weary children. But alas! my endless troubles will never leave me. My only regret is that if I am not saved, no one else will ever repeat Thy name.

The Bhagavan next sang about the joy of the Divine Mother.

THE GREAT MYSTERY

With Siva the Mother plays always, absorbed in blissful joy.
Deep drunk She is, but falls not.
She dances on the breast of Her consort,
The world quakes under the weight of Her feet.
Both have reached the climax of madness;
Both are fearless and free.

The disciples listened to the song in deep silence. What struck them was the change that had come over the Bhagavan. He was beside himself with the joy of the Lord—intoxicated with that unbounded bliss.

Twilight had fallen. The disciples would not leave their seats. With heads upraised and eager ears they listened to the sweet name of the Lord chanted by the Bhagavan, sweeter as repeated by him than any song they had ever heard before. Yes, they had never heard another child calling out so sweetly to its mother, saying, 'Mother, Mother!' It seemed as if drops of nectar fell from the lips of the Bhagavan. The infinite sky, the heaven-kissing mountain, the deep blue ocean, the boundless expanse, the deep dense wilderness—what was the use now of going to them in quest of the Divine Father and Mother of the universe? What was the use of fixing one's attention on the cow's horn or her feet or any other part of her body? The master had spoken today of the udder of the cow from which to draw the milk of divine love. Was it indeed given to those present to behold the vision of God-Incarnate in that very room? What else could have brought into the hearts of the disciples, who were weary and heavy-laden, but the perfect peace and the joy that are of the Lord? Was it possible that the man before them was God-Incarnate? Whether he was or not their minds and hearts and souls were his own to deal with just as he preached! He was already to them the Pole-star of this enigmatical life. It was for them now to watch how in his great soul the Supreme Being, the Cause of causes, was reflected. Thus did some of the disciples think within themselves. They felt that they were truly blessed as they heard the Bhagavan chant the name of the

Divine Mother and of Hari, the Lord God who taketh away all trouble, all sin and iniquity.

PRAYER TO THE DIVINE MOTHER

The chanting of the names being over, the Bhagavan prayed to the Mother. It seemed as if the God of Love had taken a human form in order to teach man how to pray. SRI RAMAKRISHNA said: "Mother, I throw myself upon Thy mercy. May the lotus of Thy feet ever keep me from whatever leadeth Thy children away from Thee! I seek not, beloved Mother, the pleasures of the senses; I seek not fame. Nor do I long for those *siddhis* (Yoga-powers) which enable one to perform miracles. What I pray for, O beloved Mother, is pure love for Thee, love untainted by desires, love without alloy, love which seeketh not the things of this world, love for Thee that welleth up unbidden from the depths of the immortal soul. Grant likewise, O Mother, that Thy child, bewitched by the fascinations of Thy enchanting powers (*maya*) may not forget Thee; yes, forget Thee, entangled in the charming net of *samsara* that Thou hast woven. O, grant that he may never be charmed into loving these! O beloved Mother, seest Thou not that Thy child hath none else in the world but Thee. I know not how to chant Thy name out of deep devotion. Devoid am I of knowledge that leadeth to Thee—devoid of genuine love (*bhakti*) for Thee! O, vouchsafe unto me that love out of Thine Infinite mercy!"

This evening prayer—was it called for in the case of this God-Man, for him who chanted the name of the Lord day and night, for him out of whose hallowed mouth there flowed a never ceasing stream of prayers unto the most High? Was it then that the master observed these forms in order to teach mankind how to live and pray?

(3)

Girish had invited Sri Ramakrishna to his house. He must come that very night. The Bhagavan said to him: "Do you not think it will be too late?"

GIRISH: "No, revered sir; thou shalt come away as early as thou pleasest".

It was about nine in the evening. Balaram had made his offerings ready for Sri Ramakrishna's supper. The gracious Bhagavan would not wound his feelings. He said to Balaram: 'Send over to Girish's house the food that you have prepared for me'. Saying this, he set out, followed by his disciples. Going downstairs from the first floor, he became like another being; he looked as if he was lost in the thought of God—as if he had drunk deep. It seemed as if sense-consciousness was beginning to leave him. A disciple went forward to hold him by the hand, lest he should miss his footing. The Bhagavan said to him with great tenderness: "If you hold me by the hand, people will say, 'He is a drunkard'. Let me walk alone without any help". He crossed the next turning just a little way from Girish's house. What made him walk so fast? The disciples were left behind. No one knew what divine idea had found its way into his heart. What made him walk like a mad man? Was it because he was thinking of that Being who in the Vedanta is said to be beyond the reach of word and thought?"

Ramakrishna's Ecstasy

Here was Narendra coming. Many a day had the Bhagavan cried, calling 'Narendra, Narendra', like one gone mad. But now Narendra was there before him and yet he exchanged no word with him. Was this what people called *bhava* (ecstasy), a state into which Chaitanya is said to have been constantly thrown? Who was there to penetrate the mystery of this Divine ecstasy?

Sri Ramakrishna had come to the end of the lane leading to Girish's house. The disciples were all following. He now spoke to Narendra, saying: "Is it well with you, my child? I had not the power then to talk to you". Every word that fell from his lips was marked by tenderness. He had not as yet come to the door of the house, but all at once he stopped short. He looked at Narendra and said: "This is one of the two—the human soul, and the other is the cosmos". Was he indeed looking at the soul and the world? If so, in what light? He was gazing on the indescribable Brahman. One or two words had dropped from his hallowed lips, like some solemn texts from inspired scriptures. Or was it that he had gone to the edge of

the Infinite Ocean and stood there speechless, looking on the boundless expanse, and had heard one or two echoes reverberating from the never-ceasing voice that comes up from the eternal deep ?

(4)

Girish stood at the door of his house. He had come to receive the Bhagavan. Sri Ramakrishna came up with his disciples. At the blessed sight Girish fell at his feet prostrate. The sight was indeed a blessed one and the disciples looked on with awe and admiration. Girish received on his head the dust of his hallowed feet and rose at the master's bidding. He led the way to the drawing room where the Bhagavan and his disciples took their seats. They longed to drink the nectar of his words which brought everlasting life.

He was about to take his seat when he found a newspaper lying by his side. As newspapers had to do with worldly-minded men, with worldly matters, with gossip and scandal, they were unholy objects in his eyes. He made a sign and the paper was removed. Thereupon he took his seat. Nityagopal[1] bowed down and saluted him.

BHAGAVAN (to Nitya): "Well! why did you not go there ?"

NITYA: "Revered sir, I was unable to go to Dakshineswara. I was out of sorts. There were pains all over my body".

BHAGAVAN: "Are you keeping well now ?"

NITYA: "Not very well, I am sorry to say".

BHAGAVAN: "You would better remain one or two notes below the highest in the scale".

NITYA: "Company does not suit me. They say all manner of things of me. That puts me into a fright. At times I am quite free from fear and I feel the spirit within me".

BHAGAVAN: "That is only natural. Who is your constant companion ?"

NITYA: "Tarak (Swami Sivananda). At times he does not suit the state of my mind".

[1] Nityagopal was a devoted Bhakta who reached a very high state of spiritual ecstasy (*bhava*). He was a young man who lived like a Sannyasin, although he did not join the Order. Occasionally he used to come to Sri Ramakrishna to pay his respects and regarded him as the Incarnation of Krishna.

BHAGAVAN: "Nangta[2] (Tota Puri) used to say that they had at their Math a *Siddha* who had acquired some miraculous powers. He used to go about with his eyes fixed on the sky, not caring for his companion Ganesh Gorjee, yet when he left him, he became disconsolate".

By this time a change had come over the Bhagavan. He remained speechless for a while. Returning to consciousness, he said: "You have come, have you? Well, I am here too". Who was there to fathom the mystery of these divine words?

(5)

Among the disciples who sat at the feet of Ramakrishna, Narendra did not believe in the Incarnation of God, while Girish had a burning faith that God incarnated Himself from age to age in this world of ours. The Bhagavan wished them to discuss the matter before him.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Girish): "I should like to hear you both talk over the matter in English".

The discussion was commenced. It was, however, carried on not in English but in Bengali, with here and there English words.

GOD MANIFEST

NARENDRA: "God is infinite; it is beyond our power to conceive Him by means of our poor intellect. God is in every

[2] Nangta was the name by which Sri Ramakrishna called his spiritual teacher in Advaita Vedanta. The word literally means, "One who does not cover his body with any clothes". Tota Puri was his real name. He was a Sannyasin monk of Sankara's school and was a great Vedantic scholar. He reached the highest state of *nirvikalpa samadhi* after practising for forty years. He used to travel from place to place in India, never spending more than three days in one spot. When he came to Dakshineswara he lived under the trees at the Panchavati and wore no clothes. After seeing Ramakrishna he desired to instruct him in Advaita Vedanta. Ramakrishna like a child replied: "I shall ask my Divine Mother, and if She gives me Her permission I shall learn from you". The sage Tota Puri was pleased with his answer. He then stayed with Ramakrishna for eleven months, which was quite unusual for him to do. He gave him instructions on the oneness of the *Jiva* with Brahman, and within three days Ramakrishna realized that Supreme Oneness by reaching the *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Seeing this state Tota Puri declared in utter amazement: "How wonderful is the Divine mystery! Thou hast acquired in three days what I accomplished after forty years of hard struggle". Since then he regarded Ramakrishna as his spiritual brother.

human being, but He is not manifest in one particular individual".

THE BHAGAVAN (affectionately): "I quite concur. He is in every object, in every human being; only there is a difference in the manifestation of Divine Energy in those objects. The Divine Energy manifest in some objects leads one away from God and is then called *avidya* (ignorance). When it leads Godward it is called *vidya*. Again, the manifested energy is greater in some person and less in others. Thus it is why all men are not equal".

A DISCIPLE: "What is the use of all this idle talk ?"

BHAGAVAN: "There is a great deal of use in it".

GIRISH (to Narendra): "How do you know that God does not take a human body, does not incarnate Himself ?"

NARENDRA: "Oh! God is surely beyond the reach of words and the finite mind."

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GOD REALIZED BY PURIFIED SOUL

RAMAKRISHNA: "Quite so, beyond the finite impure mind. But He can be realized by the purified intellect (*buddhi*). Purified intellect and purified soul are one. The holy sages (*Rishis*) realized the pure Universal Spirit by their purified intellect and purified soul".

GIRISH (to Narendra): "If God does not incarnate Himself in a human form, who will explain these difficult problems ? He assumes human form to teach mankind Divine wisdom and Divine love. Who else has the power to teach in the same manner ?"

NARENDRA: "Why, He will certainly teach me within the heart".

BHAGAVAN (affectionately): "That is indeed so. He will teach as internal Knower of the heart (*Antaryamin*)".

The discussion grew warm. It turned on matters too high for ordinary comprehension: Was Infinity indivisible ? What did Hamilton say as to the limit of human knowledge—and Herbert Spencer, Tyndall and Huxley ?

RAMAKRISHNA: "I for my part do not like these things. God is beyond the power of reasoning; He is something more. I see that whatever is, is God. What then is the necessity of

reasoning about Him? I do actually see that whatever is, is God. It is He who has become all these things. This is a stage at which the mind and the intellect (*buddhi*) are lost in the Absolute and indivisible Being. At the sight of Narendra my mind becomes merged in the Indivisible Absolute. What, pray, do you say to this?"

GIRISH (smiling): "Surely, revered sir, we do not pretend that we understand everything except this".

RAMAKRISHNA: "Thereupon at the end of *samadhi* I must come down at least two notes below the highest one in the scale before I can utter a word. Vedanta has been explained one way by Sankara, but there is another point of view of Ramanuja, who has put forward the doctrine of qualified non-dualism".

NARENDRA (to the Bhagavan): "Sir, may I ask what is meant by *visishtadvaitavada* (qualified non-dualism)?"

QUALIFIED NON-DUALISM

RAMAKRISHNA: "There is a doctrine called *visishtadvaita-vada,* the view of Ramanuja; that the Absolute (Brahman) must not be considered apart from the world and the soul. The three form one, three in one and one in three. Let us take a *bel*-fruit. Let the shell, the seeds and the kernel be kept separate. Now suppose some one wished to know the weight of the fruit. Surely it would not be sufficient to weigh the kernel alone. The shell, the seeds and the kernel are all weighed with a view to get the real weight of the fruit. No doubt, we reason at the outset that the all-important thing is the kernel—not either the shell or the seeds. In the next place, we go on reasoning that the shell and the seeds belong to the same substance to which the kernel belongs. At the first stage of the reasoning we say, 'Not this, not this'. Thus the Absolute (Brahman) is not the individual soul, again, it is not the phenomenal world. The Absolute (Brahman) is the only Reality, all else is unreal. At the next stage we go a little farther. We see that the kernel belongs to the same substance as that to which the shell and the seeds belong. Hence the substance from which we derive our negative conceptions of the Absolute Brahman is the identical substance from which we derive our negative conceptions of the finite soul and the phenomenal world. Our

relative phenomena (*lila*) must be traced to that Eternal Being which is also called the Absolute. Hence, says Ramanuja, the Absolute (Brahman) is qualified by the finite soul and the phenomenal world. This is the doctrine of the qualified non-dualistic Vedanta".

Spiritual Awakening Necessary to See the Reality

"I see that Being as a reality before my very eyes. Why should I reason ? I do actually see that the Absolute has become all things about us. It appears as the individual soul and phenomenal world. One must have an awakening of the spirit within to see the reality. How long must one reason and discriminate, saying, 'Not this, not this' ? So long as one has not realized the Absolute Reality. It is not in mere words such as 'I see that God has become everything' ; mere saying is not enough. By the Lord's grace the spirit must be awakened. Spiritual awakening is followed by *samadhi*. In this state one forgets that one has a body ; one loses all attachment to things of this world ; one likes no other words than those relating to God ; one is sorely troubled if called upon to listen to worldly matters. The Spirit within being awakened, the next step is the realization of the Universal Spirit. It is the spirit that can realize the Spirit".

Intellectual Apprehension and Realization

After the discussion was over, the Bhagavan said: "I have observed that discrimination brings only intellectual apprehension of the Absolute, which is far from true realization. The latter can be acquired by meditation in solitude (*dhyana*) ; but it is very different from realization through His grace. If He, out of His grace, makes us realize what is God-Incarnate and how He manifests through a human from, then it is no longer necessary to reason or to argue. Do you know how it is ? As in a dark room some one rubs a match on the side of the box and all at once a light is struck. So if the Lord is gracious enough to strike the light for us, the darkness of ignorance will be dispelled and all doubts will cease for ever. Can He be realized by such discussions ?"

The Bhagavan then invited Narendra to be seated by his side. He made many loving inquiries about him and caressed him.

NARENDRA: "Why revered Sir, I have meditated in solitude on the Divine Mother for three or four deys together, but nothing has come of it".

BHAGAVAN: "All in time; do not be impatient. Mother is no other than the Brahman, the Absolute. Divine Mother is the primeval Energy, but when She is without activity I call It the Brahman. But when It creates, preserves and destroys the phenomenal world I call it Sakti (Energy) or Divine Mother. That which you call the Brahman is the same as my Divine Mother. (To Girish) It is getting late".

GIRISH: "I am afraid I shall have to leave thee, revered sir, and go to my work, unfortunate that I am!"

BHAGAVAN: "No, you must serve both parties. Janaka served God unattached to the world and thus looked to the interests of this world and the next; he drank the cup of milk but did not forget the soul".

GIRISH: "I am thinking, revered sir, of giving up my profession".

BHAGAVAN: "No, no; you need not do any such thing. It is all right as it is. You are doing good to many".

NARENDRA (softly): "Just a moment ago he was addressing him as Lord, God-Incarnate, yet he still has a such strong attachment to his professional work".

The Bhagavan had Narendra seated by his side. He fixed his eyes on him. He moved down to sit closer to him. Narendra did not believe that God incarnated Himself; but what did that matter? Bhagavan's love for him was still as great as ever. Touching his body he then said to him: "Are your feelings wounded? Never mind; we, too, are of the same mind with you and feel for you".

DISPUTATIONS PREVENT REALIZATION OF GOD

BHAGAVAN continued: "So long as one reasons and argues about God, one has not realized Him. You both were engaged in discussion, but I did not like it. How long does the noise continue at a feast to which many are invited? So long as the

guests have not begun to eat. As soon as the viands are served and they begin to partake of them, three-fourths of the noise is gone. Then, the more the sweetmeats are passed around, the more the noise subsides. The nearer you come to God, the less you are disposed to argue. When you come up to Him, when you behold Him as the Reality, then all noise, all disputations are at an end. Then is the time for the enjoyment which comes in *samadhi*".

Saying this, the Bhagavan gently moved his hand over Narendra's sweet face and caressed him, repeating, 'Hari Om, Hari Om, Hari Om'.

Then what a miracle passed before the eyes of the disciple! Looking at the Bhagavan they saw his sense-consciousness beginning to leave him. Looking again, they saw that it had left him altogether. In this half-conscious state the hand of the Incarnation of divine love continued to rest on Narendra's body. Was he breathing into him the inspiration, the power that comes from above? Then yet other changes came over the Bhagavan. He said to Narendra, with folded hands: "A song do sing, then I shall get well; how else shall I be able to stand on my feet: My Nitai! Oh! He is deep drunk, intoxicated with the wine of Divine love, the love for Gauranga (God-Incarnate)".

A short while after he was speechless again, speechless like a figure cut in marble. Drunk with the joy of the Lord, the Bhagavan went on, saying: "Take care, Radha, lest thou fall into the Jamuna. O thou, mad with ecstatic love for him who incarnated himself at Brindavan, the Lord Sri Krishna!" Once more he was in deep *samadhi*. Coming back into sense-consciousness he repeated portions of a well-known song: "O my friend, how far is that blessed woodland, the land where is to be seen my own beloved one? Look! Here comes the fragrance from the blessed person of my beloved! I am unable to take a step forward, O my friend!"

Now the Bhagavan had lost all consciousness of the world. He was not mindful of anything or any person in this state. Narendra was seated before him, but apparently he did not see him. He had lost all sense of time and place. The mind, the heart and the soul had all become absorbed in God, Suddenly he stood up, saying: "Deep drunk with the wine of divine love,

with love for Gaur (God-incarnate)". A few moments after he took his seat and said: "Yonder is a light coming this way, but I cannot even now say from which way the light comes". It was then that Narendra began to sing:

GOD-VISION

1. O Lord: Thou hast blessed me with Thy vision and Thou hast driven all my troubles away.
   A charm Thou hast thrown over my soul.
2. Beholding Thee as the Reality, the seven worlds have forgotten their grief.
   Not to speak of my poor self, so worthy of Thy pity and Thy loving-kindness.

Listening to the song, the Bhagavan had once more lost all consciousness of the outer world. His eyes were closed. His body and limbs moved not. He was in deep *samadhi*. When the *samadhi* was over he asked: "Who will take me home to the temple ?" A child looking for a companion! It was getting late and it was the night of the tenth day of the dark fortnight. Sri Ramakrishna wished to go back to the temple at Dakshineswara. He seated himself in the carriage which was to take him there. The disciples stood on either side of the carriage to see him off. Even now was he deep drunk with the joy of the Lord. The carriage rolled away. The disciples looked after it for a few moments, then dispersed each to his own home.

CHAPTER XIII

A DAY AT SHYAMPUKUR

SRI RAMAKRISHNA was living at Shyampukur at the request of his householder disciples, who had hired a house for him there.

It was about half-past five in the afternoon of a day in October.[1] Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Ramakrishnananda, Saradananda, Abhedananda and other disciples were with Sri Ramakrishna. The great national festival Durga Puja had been celebrated only a few days ago, but it was difficult for the disciples to take part in the festivities with their whole heart. How could they rejoice when their master was suffering from a serious malady? Their one thought was to serve him, to nurse him, to attend to his smallest wants day and night. This devoted and unparalleled service of the Master led the way for the younger disciples (Vivekananda and others) to the great renunciation of the world of which Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was the ideal example. Through their intense love for the master they left their homes and sacrificed the duties and pleasures of life that they might give their whole soul to his service.

Notwithstanding his illness, hundreds of people came every day to pay reverential homage to him. They were eager to receive his blessing and to sit in his presence if only for a few minutes, for his presence brought peace and celestial happiness in the hearts and souls of all. Who had ever seen such unbounded compassion? He was anxious for the welfare of all those who came to him and was ever ready to help them by removing their doubts and opening their spiritual eyes. This was the time when Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna showed to the world that he was not a man of this earth, but an embodiment of Divine love.

His charm and fascination were so great that everyone who came into his presence would lose the consciousness of time and

[1] It was Tuesday, October 27th, 1885.

place. Even men like Dr. Sircar,[2] who was the busiest physician in Calcutta and who could not usually spend more than a few moments only with each patient, owing to his pressure of work, would remain with the Bhagavan hours together and sometimes the whole day. He had just now been paying Sri Ramakrishna a long visit. Rising to go he said to the Bhagavan who was then conversing with Shyam Babu[3]: "Now that you have Shyam Babu to talk to, I will bid you good bye".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Would you not like to hear some songs ?"

DOCTOR: "I should like it very much; but your feelings will be too much worked upon and you will go off into a state of ecstasy".

The doctor took his seat once more and Vivekananda sang to the accompaniment of instruments:

GOD AND HIS WORKS

1. Wonderful, infinite, is the universe made by Thee! Behold, it is the repository of all beauty.
2. Thousands of stars do shine—a necklace of gold studded with gems. Innumerable are the moons and suns.
3. The earth is adorned with wealth and corn; full indeed is Thy storehouse. O Great Lord! Innumerable are the stars which sing, 'Well done, Lord! well done!' They sing without ceasing.

KALI THE MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE

1. In the midst of the dense darkness, O Mother, breaketh forth the light of Thy formless beauty.
   For this the Yogi meditateth in the mountain cave.
2. In the lap of darkness infinite and borne on the sea of great Nirvana.
   The fragrance of peace everlasting floweth without ceasing.

[2] Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar was the best Hindu physician in Calcutta at that time. He was a great authority in medical science and his opinion carried weight with the European physicians of highest repute. He was also the founder of the Science Association in Calcutta, where he occasionally delivered scientific lectures on Physics and Chemistry.

[3] Shyam Babu was a rich Hindu of Calcutta and an intimate friend of Dr. Sircar.

3. O Mother! who art Thou, seated alone within the temple
of *samadhi* assuming the form of the great Consort of the
Lord of Eternity; and wearing the apparel of darkness?
The lotus of Thy feet keepeth us from fear, in them doth
flash the lightning of Thy love for Thy children;
And loud laughter adorneth Thy spiritual face.

DOCTOR (to Vivekananda): "It is dangerous for him—this singing. It will work upon his feelings with serious results".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Vivekananda): "What does the doctor say?"

VIVEKANANDA: "Sir, the doctor is afraid lest this singing bring on ecstasy (*bhava-samadhi*)".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to the doctor, with folded hands): "No, oh no; why should my feelings be worked upon? I am very well".

But as soon as these words were uttered, the Bhagavan, who was already losing sense-consciousness, went into deep *samadhi*. His body became motionless. The eyes moved not. He sat speechless like a veritable figure of wood or stone. All sense-consciousness had ceased to be. The mind, the principle of personal identity, the heart, had all stepped out of their wonted course towards that one Object, the Mother of the universe.

Again did Vivekananda pour forth with his sweet, charming voice, melody after melody. He sang:

THE LORD, MY HUSBAND

1. How glorious is the beauty! How charming is the face!
The Lord of my heart hath come to my (humble) abode.
2. Lo! the spring of my love is running over (with joy)!
3. O Lord of my soul! Thou who are pure love, what riches
can I offer to Thee! O, accept my heart, my life, my all.
Yes, Lord, my all deign to accept!

NOTHING GOOD OR BEAUTIFUL WITHOUT THE LORD

1. What comfort can there be in life, O gracious Lord!
If the bee of soul doth not always linger on Thy lotus-feet!
2. What use can there be in countless wealth,
If Thou, the most precious gem, art not kept with care!
3. The tender face of the child I will not look upon,
If in the face, lovely as the moon, I see not Thy loving face!

4. How beautiful the moonlight! Yet I see darkness alone, if at moonrise the moon of Thy love doth not also rise in my soul.
5. Even the pure love of the chaste wife will seem impure, if the gold of her love be not set with the gem of Thy love Divine.
6. Lord, like the sting of a poisonous snake is doubt of Thee, the offspring of ignorance.
7. Lord, what more shall I say to Thee!
   Thou art the priceless Jewel of my heart, the Abode of joy everlasting!

Vivekananda sang again,

The Ecstatic Love of God

When shall love Divine enter my heart!
Having all desires fulfilled, when shall I chant the name of the Lord (Hari) while streams of love-tears flow from my eyes!
When shall my heart and soul be pure! O, when shall I go to the Brindavan of love! When will the fetters of the world drop off, and the darkness of my eyes be dispelled by the collyrium of wisdom!
When shall the iron of my body be changed into gold by Thy touch Divine!
When shall I see the world pervaded by God alone, and prostrate myself in the path of love Divine!
When shall my religious works and daily duties be things of the past! When shall my sense of caste and family be gone!
O, when shall I rise above fear, anxiety and shame!
When shall I be free from pride and social customs!
With the dust of the feet of true Bhaktas rubbed over my body; with the script of renunciation placed on my shoulders, when shall I drink in both hands the water from the river of love Divine!

Sri Ramakrishna had a special liking for this hymn in Hindustani by Zaffir, the Sufi poet:

Thou art the refuge and joy of my heart.
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art;

Only in Thee have I found my Beloved,
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art.
Thou art the dwelling of all Thy creatures.
Where Thou abidest not can there be one heart
In each heart surely Thy presence has entered;
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art.
Either in men or angels triumphant, either in
Hindu or Mussalman Thou art!
The holy will has made everything like Thee;
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art.
Whether Mohammedan temples or Hindu,
Perfectly pure has Thy touch made each part,
All heads before Thee have bowed in devotion;
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art.
From the high heavens to earth spread before us,
From the vast earth to the heavens Thou art,
Wherever I look to my sight Thou appearest;
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art.
Thinking and pondering I have seen clearly,
Searching I have found not another as Thou art;
Now in the mind of the poet has come that,
All that is Thou art, all in all Thou art.

Three Obstacles in the Way of Perfection

In the midst of the songs, Sri Ramakrishna had come to himself again. The music was hushed. Then followed conversation with the Bhagavan, which was always charming alike to the learned and the illiterate, to the old and the young, to men and women, to the great and the lowly. The whole company sat mute and looked in silence on his divine face. Was there any trace now of that serious illness from which he was suffering? Joy alone was there, and radiance of celestial glory. Turning to the doctor, Sri Ramakrishna began: "Do give up shyness, doctor. One should not be shy in repeating before others the name of the Lord, or in dancing with joy while chanting His sweet name. Do not care what people may say. There is a proverb: 'Three obstacles lie in the way of perfection—shyness, contempt and fear'. The shy man thinks: 'I, who am so important, how can I dance in the name of the Lord? What will other great people say if they hear of it?'

They may say: 'What a shame! The poor doctor has lost his head. He has danced while chanting the name of the Lord'. Give up all such foolish ideas".

DOCTOR: "That is not my line at all. I do not care what people say".

TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (smiling): "On the contrary, you do care very much. Go beyond knowledge and ignorance, then you will realize God. Knowledge of diversity is ignorance. The egotism bred of erudition proceeds from ignorance. That knowledge, by which we know that God exists everywhere, is true knowledge. But to know Him intimately is realization (*vijnana*)".

REALIZATION

KNOWLEDGE IS RELATIVE

"Suppose your foot is pierced with a thorn, you require a second thorn to take it out. When the first thorn is taken out you throw both away. So in order to get rid of the thorn of ignorance you must bring the thorn of knowledge. Then you must throw away both ignorance and knowledge[4] to attain to the complete realization of God, the Absolute; for the Absolute is above and beyond knowledge as well as ignorance. Lakshman once said to his Divine brother: 'O Rama, is it not strange that a God-knowing man like Vasishthadeva should have wept for the loss of his sons and would not be comforted?' Thereupon Rama replied: 'He who has knowledge has also some ignorance. He who has knowledge of one object, has also the knowledge of many objects. He who has the knowledge of light, has also the knowledge of darkness, but the Brahman, the Absolute, is beyond knowledge and ignorance and above virtue and vice, merit and demerit, purity and impurity' ".

SHYAM BABU: "Sir, may I ask what remains after both thorns are thrown away?"

THE ABSOLUTE BRAHMAN

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "What remains is the Absolute, called in the Vedas *nitya-shuddha-bodharupam* (the unchangeable,

[4] This knowledge belongs to lower order i.e. it is the object-knowledge.

the absolutely pure source of all knowledge). But how shall I explain it to you ? Suppose some one asks you what is the taste of *ghee* (clarified butter) like. Is it possible to define it ? The utmost that you can say that it is precisely like the taste of *ghee*. A young girl once asked a friend: "Your husband has come ; tell me what short of joy you feel when you meet him ?' Thereupon the maried friend replied: 'My dear, you will know everything when you have got a husband of your own ; how can I explain it to you ?'

"In the *Puranas* we are told that the Mother of the universe incarnated Herself as the daughter of the presiding god of the Himalayas. Just after she was born, the king of the mountains was blessed with a vision of the various manifestations of the Omnipotent Mother. Then he said: 'O Mother! Let me see the Brahman about whom there is so much in the Vedas'. The child-incarnate thereupon said: 'O father, if thou wishest to see the Absolute Brahman thou must associate with the holy sages who have renounced everything. What the Absolute Brahman is, cannot be expressed in words'. The Tantra has well said: "All things with the sole exception of God, the Absolute, have become defiled like remains of food left after eating'. The idea is that the sacred scriptures of the world having been read and recited with the aid of the tongue have got defiled like food thrown out of the mouth. The Absolute Brahman, however, no one has ever been able to describe by word (*vakya*). Therefore it is said that the Absolute is not defiled by the mouth. Again who can express in words the blissful joy that one experiences in the company of the Lord and in communion with the absolute *Sat-Chit-Ananda* ? He alone knows who has been blessed with such realization".

Addressing the doctor, Sri Ramakrishna continued: "True knowledge does not come until egotism is entirely gone".

Egotism and Knowledge
Prayer of a True Bhakta

"When shall I be free ? When 'I' shall cease to be. The sense of 'I' and 'mine' is ignorance. The sense of 'Thou' and 'Thine' is knowledge. A true Bhakta says: "O Lord! Thou art the doer, Thou hast created everything, I am nothing but

an instrument in Thy hands. I do only whatever Thou makest me do. All this is Thy wealth, Thy glory. Thine is the universe, Thine the family, Thine the relatives. Nothing belongs to me, I am Thy servant. Thine is to command and mine is to serve Thee with my whole heart and soul".

Egotism

"Egotism comes to all those who have studied a few books and have acquired a little learning. I had a talk with Tagore[5] about the nature of God. He said to me: 'I know all about it'. I replied: 'He who has been to Delhi does not go about telling others 'I have been to Delhi' and so on. He who is a true gentleman does not boast of being a gentleman' ".

Shyam Babu: "Sir, Tagore has a great respect for you".

Vanity

Sri Ramakrishna: "My dear sir, shall I tell you of the vanity of the sweeper-woman in the temple at Dakshineswara? She had a few ornaments on her person and she was so vain that whenever she walked along the road, if she found anyone near, she would shout: 'Get out of my way! Get out of my way!' What shall I say about the vanity of wealthy people of higher castes!"

A Devotee: "If God is the one Actor in the universe, then whence come good and evil, virtue and vice? Do they exist by His will?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "In this world of relativity, good and evil, virtue and vice exist, but they do not touch the Lord. God is unattached to them like the wind which is unaffected by the good or bad odour which it carries. His creation is of dual nature, consisting of good and evil, real and unreal. As among trees there are some which bear good fruits, others poisonous, so among human beings there are good men and wicked, sinful men. Wicked people have their place in the world. Do you not see that wicked people are necessary to govern the law-breakers and evil-doers of a community?"

[5] Devendra Nath Tagore.

THE LORD UNTOUCHED BY GOOD AND EVIL

SHYAM BABU: "Sir, we are told on the one hand that man is punished for his sins, and on the other that God is the sole Actor, all creatures being humble instruments in His hands. How shall we reconcile these two things?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "You talk like a gold merchant weighing things with delicate balance".

CALCULATING INTELLECT

VIVEKANANDA: "What the Bhagavan means to say is that you are talking like one who has a calculating intellect".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "I say, O Podo, eat these mangoes. What is the use of counting how many mango-trees there are in the garden, how many thousands of branches, how many millions of leaves, and so on? You are here to eat the mangoes. Eat them and go away. (To Shyam Babu) You have come into this world to realize God by means of religious works. Your first effort should be to acquire love (*bhakti*) for the lotus feet of the Almighty. Why do you trouble yourself with other things? What will you gain by discussing philosophy? Do you not see that four ounces of wine are quite enough to intoxicate you? Why do you then inquire how many barrels of wine there are in the wine-shop? Of what use is such vain calculation?"

DOCTOR: "God's wine, again, is beyond all measure. The supply can never be exhausted".

LAY CARES ON GOD

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Shyam Babu): "Furthermore, why do you not execute a power of attorney in favour of the Lord? Let all your cares and responsibilities rest on Him. If anyone trust an honest man, will that man do any wrong? God alone knows whether He will punish sinful acts or not".

DOCTOR: "He alone knows what is in His mind. How can man surmise it? He is beyond all human calculation".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Shyam Babu): "You people of Calcutta always find fault with Divine justice. You often complain that God is partial, because He makes one happy and

another unhappy. You foolish people see in God the same nature as your own. Hem used to come to Dakshineswara with his friends. Whenever he saw me he would say: 'Sir, there is only one thing worth having in this world and that is honour, is it not so?' Very few understand that the end of human life is to attain God".

Subtle Body

Shyam Babu: "Sir, is it possible for anyone to show the subtle body? Can anyone show that the subtle body goes out of the gross body?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "Those who are true Bhaktas, will not care to show you all this. They do not care in the least whether fools will respect them or not. They do not seek the favour of rich people".

Shyam Babu: "Well, sir, what is the difference between the gross body and the subtle body?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "This physical body made of gross elements is called the gross body. *Manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahankara* (egoism) and *chitta,* all these are in the subtle body. The inner body which feels the joy of the Lord and Divine ecstasy is called the *karana-sharira* (causal body). The Tantras call it the *bhagavati-tanu,* or the body derived from the Divine Mother. Beyond these is the *mahakarana,* the first great cause. It is the fourth state. It cannot be expressed by words".

The Importance of Practice

"What is the use of hearing all this? Practise and you will know. You repeat the words *'siddhi, siddhi'* (hemp-leaves). Will that make you drunk? No, you must swallow some. There are threads of various numbers, No. 40, No. 41, and so on; but you do not know one number from another unless you are in the trade. It is by no means hard for those in the trade to know a particular number from that of another number. That being so, I say, practise a little. That done, it will be easy for you to have correct ideas as to the gross body, the subtle body, the *karana* (the causal body made of joy) and the *mahakarana* (the great cause or the unconditioned).

"When you pray, ask for *bhakti,* devotion to His lotus feet. After Ahalya[6] was made free from the curse called down upon her by her husband, Ramachandra said: 'Ask for a boon from me'. Ahalya replied: 'O Rama, if thou wilt give me a boon, do thou grant that my mind may ever be on thy feet beautiful like the lotus. O, I pray to thee that even I may be born among swine, but that will not matter' ".

Prayer for Bhakti

"For my part, I pray for love (*bhakti*) alone to my Divine Mother. Putting flowers upon Her lotus feet, with folded hands I prayed: 'Mother, here is ignorance, here is knowledge. Oh! Take them; I want them not. Grant that I may have pure love alone. Here is cleanliness (of the mind and body), here is uncleanliness; what shall I do with them? Let me have pure love alone. Oh! Here is sin, here is merit; I want neither the one nor the other. Let me have pure love alone. Here is good, here is evil. Oh! Take them; I want them not. Let me have pure love alone. Here are good works, here are bad works. Oh! Place me above them; I want them not. Grant that I may have pure love alone' ".

Dual Existence

"If you take the fruit of good works, like charity, you must take the fruit of bad works also. If you take the fruit of merit, you must take the fruit of sin also. Knowledge of the One (*jnana*) implies knowledge of the many (*ajnana*). Taking cleanliness, you cannot get rid of its opposite, uncleanliness. Thus a knowledge of light implies a knowledge of darkness, its opposite. A knowledge of unity implies a knowledge of diversity".

Animal Food and Vegetarianism

"Blessed is the man who loves God. What matters it if he eats the flesh of swine? On the other hand, if a man lives

[6] Ahalya the wife of the great logician, the sage Gautama. She was a devoted wife, but the villainy of her seducer, who personated her husband, made her unchaste. Hence the curse, the effect of which was, it is said, that she was turned into stone. The touch of Ramachandra made her human once more.

upon vegetables but is attached to the world and does not love God, what good shall he gain ?"

Work with the Mind Fixed on God

(To Shyam Babu) "To live the life of a householder is by no means wrong. But take care that you work without attachment, with your mind always pointing to the feet of the Lord. Suppose a person has a carbuncle on the back. Now this man talks as usual. Perhaps he attends to his daily work. But pain constantly puts him in mind of the carbuncle. In the same way, although you are in the world, you should turn your mind constantly to God. A woman carrying on an intrigue with a lover thinks of this lover all the time that she is attending to her household duties. Live in the world like such a woman, doing your many duties with your soul secretly yearning for the Lord".

Theosophy

Shyam Babu: "Sir, what do you think of Theosophy?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "The long and the short of the matter is that people who make disciples belong to an inferior order of men. Again, those who seek for powers also belong to an inferior class, such powers, for example, as the power of getting across the Ganges without any help or the power of reporting here what a person is talking about in a far off country, and other psychic powers. It is by no means easy for such people to get pure *bhakti* (love) for the Lord".

Shyam Babu: "But, sir, the Theosophists seek to put Hinduism once more on a firm basis".

Sri Ramakrishna: "That may be. I am not well posted as to their views or doings".

Shyam Babu: "Questions like the following are dealt with in Theosophy. What region is the soul bound for after death—the lunar sphere or the stellar mansions?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "It may be. But let me give you an idea of my way of thinking. Somebody put it to Hanuman, the great lover of God, 'What day of the lunar fortnight is it?' Hanuman replied: 'My dear sir, excuse me. I know

nothing about the days of the week, the day of the lunar fortnight, or the stars telling of the destiny on a particular day. That is not my concern. I meditate on Rama and on Rama alone' ".

SHYAM BABU: "Sir, the Theosophists believe in Mahatmas. May I ask whether you hold that these Mahatmas are real beings?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "If you care to take my word for truth, I say 'yes'. But let these matters be dropped now. Come when I am better. Do but put faith in my words and I shall see that you find peace. Do you not observe that I do not take either money or clothes or any other thing? In some theatrical representations well-to-do visitors are expected to encourage the actors by gifts of money during the performance. Here people are not called upon to make such gifts. This is why so many come here.

(To the Doctor) "What I have to say to you is this—but do not take offence. You have had enough of the things of the world, money, fame, lectures, and so on. Now give your mind a little to God, and come here now and then. It is good to listen to words relating to God. Such words enlighten the soul and turn it to the Lord".

A short while after, the Doctor stood up to say good-bye. But just then Girish came in, and the Doctor was so glad to see him that he took his seat again. Girish, stepping forward, saluted the Bhagavan and kissed the dust of his hallowed feet. The Doctor watched all this in silence.

DOCTOR: "So long as I was here, Girish Babu was not good enough to come. He must come just as I am about to go".

There was then a talk about the Science Association and the lectures delivered there. Girish took an interest in these lectures.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to the Doctor): "Will you take me some day to the Association?"

DOCTOR: "My dear sir, once you are there, you would lose all sense-consciousness at the sight of the glorious and wonderful works of God, of the intelligence shown in these works and the adaptation of the means to the end".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Oh indeed!"

Worship of the Spiritual Preceptor

Doctor (to Girish): "Do everything else, but pray do not worship him as God. By doing so, you are only bringing ruin on such a holy man".

Girish: "Sir, there is, I fear, no help for it. He who has enabled me to get across this terrible sea of the world and the no less terrible sea of scepticism—how else shall I serve such a person? There is nothing in him I cannot worship".

Doctor: "I myself hold that all men are equal. As to this holy man, do you think I cannot salute and kiss the dust of his feet? Look here!" (The Doctor saluted and kissed the dust of the Bhagavan's feet.)

Girish: "Oh, sir, the angels in heaven are saying: 'Blessed, blessed be this auspicious moment!'"

Doctor: "You seem to think that saluting anyone's feet is something like a marvel! You do not see that I can do the same in the case of everybody. (To a gentleman seated near) Now, sir, oblige me by allowing me to salute your feet. (To another) And you, sir. (To a third) And you, sir. (The Doctor saluted at the feet of many)".

Vivekananda (to the Doctor): "Sir, we look upon the Bhagavan as a person who is like God. Let me make my idea clear to you. There is a point somewhere between the vegetable creation and the animal creation where it is difficult to say whether a particular thing is a vegetable or an animal. Much in the same way there is a point somewhere between the man-world and the God-world where you cannot say with certainty whether a person is a human being or God".

Doctor: "Well, my friend, matters relating to God cannot be explained by analogy".

Vivekananda: "I say, not God, but Godlike man".

Doctor: "You should not give vent to the feelings of reverence like that. Speaking for myself, no one has been able, I am sorry to say, to judge my inward feelings. My best friends often regard me as stern and cruel. Even you, my good friends, may beat me some day with shoes and turn me out".

Sri Ramakrishna (to the Doctor): "Do not say that Doctor. These people love you so much. They watch and

look for you like ladies come together in the bride-chamber looking for the coming bridegroom".

GIRISH: "Everyone here has the greatest respect for you".

DOCTOR (sorrowfully): "My son—even my wife looks upon me as hard-hearted, and for the simple reason that I am by nature loath to show my feelings".

GIRISH: "In that case, sir, do you not think it would be better to throw open the door of your mind, at least out of pity for your friends? You well see that your friends do not understand you".

DOCTOR: "Shall I say it? Well, my feelings are worked up even more than yours. (To Vivekananda) I shed tears in solitude".

DOCTOR (to Sri Ramakrishna): "Sir, may I say that it is not good that you allow people to touch your feet with their body while you are in *samadhi*?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "You do not mean that I am conscious of this?"

DOCTOR: "You feel that it is not a right thing to do; do you not?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "What shall I say as regards the state of my mind during *samadhi*? After the *samadhi* is over I often go so far as to ask myself: May not this be the cause of the disease that I have got? The thing is, the thought of God makes me mad. All this is the result of Divine madness. There is no help for it".

DOCTOR (to the disciples): "He expresses regret for what he does. He feels that the act is wrong".

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Girish): "You have great penetration. You explain it all to him; will you not?"

GIRISH (to the Doctor): "Sir, you are quite mistaken. He is by no means sorry that his feet touch the bodies of the devotees. His body is pure, sinless; it is purity itself. He is good enough in his anxiety for their spiritual welfare, to allow his hallowed feet to touch the bodies of the devotees. As a result of his taking their sins upon himself, his own body, he thinks, may be suffering from disease. Think of your own case. You were once taken ill, so you have told us, as the result of hard study. Well, did you not at that time express regret that you had sat up reading until very late at night? Does that

prove that reading until the late hours of night is bad ? The Bhagavan may be sorry from the point of view of the patient ; he is by no means sorry from the point of view of a teacher from God anxious for the welfare of humanity".

DOCTOR (somewhat disconcerted): "I confess I am beaten. Now give me the dust of your feet. (To Vivekananda) Above all I must admit the acuteness of Girish's intellectual powers".

VIVEKANANDA (to the Doctor): "You may view the question in another way. You sometimes devote your life to the task of making a scientific discovery, and then you do not look after your body, your health or anything. Now the knowledge of God is the grandest of all sciences ; is it not natural that the Bhagavan has risked his health for this end, and, it may be, sacrificed it? We offer to him worship equal to Divine worship".

The Doctor then saluted the Bhagavan and took his leave. At that moment Bijoy entered and prostrated himself at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. He had been making pilgrimages to various holy places, and Mahima said to him: "Sir, you have just returned from a pilgrimage ; you have seen many things ; kindly tell us about them".

PILGRIMAGE USELESS

BIJOY: "What shall I say ? I see now that here I find everything. To go on pilgrimages is useless travelling. There are some places where you will find one-sixteenth or at the utmost one-fourth of what you see here. In the Bhagavan I find everything in full complement. I have not found anyone who possesses anything more than our Bhagavan".

RAMAKRISHNA (to Vivekananda): "Look what a wonderful change has taken place in Bijoy. His character has become entirely different, as if the milk has been boiled and thickened. By seeing the neck and forehead I can recognize the state of Paramahamsa".

MAHIMA (to Bijoy): "Sir, you take very little food, do you not?".

BIJOY: "Yes, I believe I do. (To Ramakrishna) Revered sir, hearing of thy illness I have come to see thee".

RAMAKRISHNA: "What?"

BIJOY kept silent for a while and then said: "No one can understand thy perfection unless thou givest the power".

RAMAKRISHNA: "Kedar said to me that when he went to other places he starved, but that here he always found food in abundance".

BIJOY (clasping his hands before Ramakrishna): "Lord, I know thee now. I understand thy glory. Thou needest not tell me of it".

Thereupon Ramakrishna went into *samadhi*. When he returned, he said: "If that be so, let it be so".

BIJOY: "Yes Lord, now I know thee".

Saying this, Bijoy prostrated himself before Ramakrishna and pressed to his breast the hallowed feet of the Lord. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, again losing all sense-consciousness, entered into Godconsciousness and remained motionless like a carven image. Seeing this wonderful sight, some of the devotees shed tears of joy and happiness, while others kneeled and began to pray to the Bhagavan. Each one fixed his eyes upon Sri Ramakrishna and according to the innermost feeling of his heart, realized his Ideal in him. Some saw in him the ideal devotee, while others recognized the Divine Incarnation in a human form. Mahima with tears of joy in his eyes chanted: "Behold, behold, the embodiment of Divine love!" And after a few minutes, as if catching a glimpse of the Absolute Brahman in Ramakrishna, he exclaimed: "Infinite Existence, Intelligence and Love, beyond unity and diversity!"

AVATARA

After remaining in this state for a long time, Bhagavan Ramakrishna came down once more on the human plane and said: "God incarnates Himself in a human form. It is true that He dwells everywhere, in all living creatures, but the desires of the human soul cannot be fulfilled except by an *Avatara* or divine Incarnation. The human being longs to see Him, touch Him, be with Him and enjoy His divine company. In order to fulfil such desires, the Incarnation of God is necessary.

"When an *Avatara* or divine Incarnation descends, however, the people at large do not know it. It is known only to a few

chosen disciples. Can everyone comprehend the indivisible Absolute Brahman, Existence-Intelligence-Bliss Absolute ?"

Rama

"When the supreme Lord incarnated Himself as Rama, only twelve sages knew it. The other saints and sages knew him as the prince of the Raja Dasharatha. But those twelve sages prayed to him, saying: 'O Rama, thou art the indivisible Existence-Intelligence-Bliss Absolute. Thou hast incarnated in this human form. By thine own power of *maya* thou appearest as a human being, but in reality thou art the Lord of the universe.' "

CHAPTER XIV

COSSIPUR GARDEN-HOUSE

(1)

BHAGAVAN RAMAKRISHNA resided for a few months in a large and beautiful garden at Cossipur, about two miles north of Calcutta. Here he was constantly surrounded by his most beloved Sannyasin disciples and by those women disciples who were especially devoted to him.

The Sannyasin disciples of the inner circle (*antaranga*) were eleven in number[1]. They were all of noble families and most of them were young and well-educated. They had left their homes and relatives for his sake. Their one aim in life was to serve their Master, the living God on earth and the Incarnation of the Divinity in a human form. The love of Sri Ramakrishna captivated their hearts and souls. Indeed these earnest and sincere disciples were the pillars upon which the Divine manifestation was about to build the structure of his universal mission. The illness which the Bhagavan had assumed upon his physical form was the means by which he gathered his beloved ones around him and gave them the opportunity to nurse and wait upon their Divine Master. They sacrificed their personal comfort upon the altar of true devotion and served their Lord with whole heart and soul day after day and night after night. Their devotion was unique and unparalleled in the religious history of modern India. It was these young disciples who afterwards became the world-renowned Swamis of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna. There were also householder disciples, like Suresh, Balaram, Girish, Rama, Mahendra and others, who used to come frequently to see Sri Ramakrishna and to serve him by supplying the household with all necessary things.

[1] Narendra (Vivekananda), Rakhal (Brahmananda), Niranjan (Niranjanananda), Sashi (Ramakrishnananda), Sarat (Saradananda), Baburam (Premananda), Kali (Abhedananda), Jogin (Yogananda), Latoo (Adbhutananda), Gopal (Advaitananda), Tarak (Sivananda).

(2)

Sri Ramakrishna occupied the large room on the first floor of the beautiful house situated in the centre of the spacious garden. He was seated on his bed, which was spread on the floor, and was surrounded by his Sannyasin and householder disciples. Conversation arose concerning *sannyasa* (renunciation) and a householder's life, and Girish asked: "Bhagavan, which is right—to renounce the world with a view to avoid worldly cares and suffering or to worship God living with one's family ?

To Live in the World or to Renounce It

Bhagavan referred to the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* and said: "He who lives with his family but is unattached to the relations and things of the world, who performs his duties without seeking the result of his works, attains to God in the same manner as one who has renounced the world after realizing that earthly relations and objects are transitory and unreal. Those who renounce the world merely to avoid worldly cares and suffering belong to the lowest class of Sannyasins. He who has attained to God living in the world is like the man who resides in a crystal palace and sees everything of the outside as well as of the inside of the palace".

Girish said: "Bhagavan, why is it that mind after reaching a very high plane comes down to the world ?"

Fickleness of the Mind

Bhagavan: "It is natural with the mind of one who lives in the world. Sometimes it is on a high plane and sometimes on a low. Sometimes there is a great upheaval of devotional feeling, then again it subsides, because the attraction of lust and wealth is very strong. A devotee who lives in the world may meditate on God and repeat His holy name, but again his mind is attracted by the power of lust and wealth, just as a fly sometimes lights on the most delicious sweetmeat and sometimes relishes the taste of filth or of a rotten carcass".

A True Sannyasin

"It is different, however, with those who have renounced the world. They have detached their mind entirely from lust

and wealth and have fixed it upon the Supreme. They constantly drink the nectar of Divine love. The mind of a true Sannyasin does not care for anything other than the Supreme. He leaves the place where worldly talk prevails. He listens to discourses about the highest spiritual Truth alone. A true Sannyasin does not speak of worldly matters, he utters no word which has not bearing upon the spiritual Ideal. A bee sits on flowers only to drink honey. It does not care for any other object". Then, referring to Rakhal (Swami Brahmananda), who had a wife and a child before he renounced the world, Ramakrishna said: "Rakhal and others like him have now understood which is good and which is evil, which is real and which is unreal. They have realized that earthly relations are transitory and ephemeral. They will never again be attached to the world. They are like eels which live in the mud but remain untouched by it".

GIRISH: "I do not understand all that. Thou hast the power to make everyone unattached to the world and free from bondage. Thou hast the power to make everyone perfect whether a Sannyasin or a householder. When the malaya-breeze blows it can transform all trees into sandalwood trees".

THE WORTHY WILL BECOME PERFECT

BHAGAVAN: "But pithless trees like the banana and the cotton-tree are not transformed into sandal-wood. Similarly those who are worthy will become perfect. Worldliness (*samsara*) means attachment to lust and wealth. Many worldly people consider wealth as their heart's blood. But if you take too much care of wealth, perhaps one day it will go entirely out of your possession. In our country farmers build earthen embankments round their fields. Those who do not leave open any passage for water and take too much care of their embankments, invariably have their fields washed off first by the tremendous current of the water; but those who keep one side open, find that their fields become enriched with alluvial deposits and more fertile in the end. They make the best use of their riches who spend them in the service of the Lord and of holy sages. They reap good fruits of their wealth who give freely to the poor and needy and for the good of humanity".

THE BHAGAVAN continued: "I cannot use any object that is given to me by physicians and medical practitioners who live upon the painful diseases of other people. However, it is different with those physicians who are kind-hearted, charitable and unselfish".

(3)

TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES RENUNCIATION

To remove or destroy the pride and egotism of his disciples, Sri Ramakrishna told them to wear the seamless ochre robe of the Sannyasin and to take up the begging-bowl. Being himself a perfect Sannyasin, he loved to see his disciples following him in the path of renunciation. On different occasions he sent them out, as Buddha and Sankara had done with their disciples, to beg food from door to door. One morning he called certain among his beloved ones—Narendra, Sarat, Jogen, Niranjan, Kali—and asked them whether they could go forth with the Sannyasin's begging-bowl and beg uncooked food for him. It was indeed a great blow to the caste pride as well as to the sense of self-respect of these young disciples. Obeying the Master's wish, however, they took the begging-bowl (*bhiksha-patra*) in their hands, walked from door to door in the neighbourhood, collected various articles of food, brought them before their Master and offered them at his holy feet. Bhagavan Ramakrishna blessed them and rejoiced at their sincere and earnest devotion. This was the manner in which the Bhagavan initiated his disciples in the life of absolute renunciation.

(4)

MEANING OF HIS ILLNESS

One evening Sri Ramakrishna was attended by his faithful servants Sashi (Ramakrishnananda) and Kali (Abhedananda), who were waiting upon him. The Bhagavan opened his mouth and inspired them by saying: "The illness of my body is caused by the sins of those who come and touch my feet. I purify the sinners by taking their sins upon myself and suffering for them. He who was Rama, who was Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Chaitanya, has now become Ramakrishna. Blessed are those who

know this truth. My Divine Mother has shown me that the photograph of this body will be kept upon altars and be worshipped in different houses as the pictures of other *Avataras* are worshipped. My Divine Mother has also shown me that I shall have to come back again and that my next Incarnation will be in the West".

(5)

Narendra (Vivekananda) had extreme longing for the realization of the Brahman, the Absolute. One day Bhagavan Ramakrishna, addressing Narendra in the presence of other disciples, said: "I hold the key of the chest which contains the treasure of the highest realization. I shall not unlock that chest until you have finished my work which I wish you to do".

(6)

CURE OF HIS ILLNESS

Pandit Sashadhar came one day to pay his respects to Bhagavan Ramakrishna. Seeing his illness, he asked him: "Bhagavan, why dost thou not concentrate thy mind upon the diseased part and thus cure thyself ?"

THE BHAGAVAN replied: "How can I fix my mind, which I have given to God, upon this cage of flesh and blood ?"

SASHADHAR said: "Why dost thou not pray to thy Divine Mother for cure of thy illness ?"

THE BHAGAVAN answered: "When I think of my Mother, the physical body vanishes and I am entirely out of it, so it is impossible for me to pray for anything concerning the body".

Hearing this, Sashadhar bowed at his holy feet and asked for his blessing.

(7)

HIS LOVE FOR HUMANITY

The news of Sri Ramakrishna's illness spread like wild fire among all those who had known him or heard of his divine personality. Hundreds of people came every day to see him and to pay reverent homage to him. Some came to receive his blessing, some to kiss the dust of his holy feet, some to hear a few words uttered by him, and others to clear the doubts of

their minds. Among these were a few more devoted ones, like Sarada, Hari, Gangadhar, Subodh, Tulsi, who afterwards joined the Order and were known as Trigunatita, Turiyananda, Akhandananda, Subodhananda, and Nirmalananda. Bhagavan Ramakrishna received them all with equal kindness and was ever ready to help them. Although his physical body was weakened and exhausted, still his desire to help mankind was so great that he often exclaimed: "I would give twenty thousand bodies like this if by that I could help one single soul in the path of righteousness and Godconsciousness!"

Dr. Sircar and other physicians gave strict orders to the Sannyasin disciples to allow no one to come near the Bhagavan, as he needed absolute rest and must have no excitement of any kind. The Sannyasin disciples followed this advice to the letter and would not allow even the householder disciples to come near him or touch his holy body. But Sri Ramakrishna could not bear this bondage. He burst into tears when he heard of this restriction. His heart melted with divine love and he declared that his suffering was infinitely less than that of the worldly people who were groaning under the burden of their worldly cares and anxieties and who had no one to lift them above this mundane existence. His love for humanity was so great that, disregarding his bodily welfare, he called everyone near unto him in the same manner as Jesus the Christ called all those who were heavily laden and who sought for peace and rest.

Many a time the Bhagavan declared before his beloved Sannyasin children: "Divine Mother is working through this form. She has kept it so long because Her work is not yet finished".

His Oneness with All

When he could scarcely speak or swallow any food, the Bhagavan said: "I am now speaking and eating through so many mouths. I am the Soul of all individual souls. I have infinite mouths, infinite heads, infinite hands and feet. My pure form is spiritual. It is absolute existence, intelligence and bliss condensed, as it were. It has neither birth nor death, neither sorrow, disease, nor suffering. It is immortal and perfect. I see the indivisible Absolute Brahman (*Sat-Chit-*

Ananda) within me as well as all around me. You are all like my own parts. The Infinite Brahman is manifesting Itself through so many human forms. Human bodies are like pillow-cases of different shapes and various colours, but the cotton wool of the internal spirit is one. When *Jiva* (ego) enters into that Spirit and becomes one with it, there is neither pain nor suffering. I am the Infinite Spirit covered by a human skin which has a wound somewhere near the throat. Mind affects the body and is in turn affected by the body. When the body is ill, that illness reacts upon the mind. When one is burned by hot water one says: 'This water has burned me', but the truth is that heat burns and not the water. All pain is in the body, all disease is in the body, but the Spirit is above pain and beyond the reach of disease.

Purpose of His Illness

"My illness is to teach mankind how to think of the Spirit and how to live in Godconsciousness even when there is extreme pain in the body; when the body is suffering from the agony of pain and starvation. When there is no remedy within human power, even then the Mother shows that Spirit is the master of the body. My illness is to set an example of absolute mastery of the Spirit over matter in this age of materialism and scepticism. My Divine Mother has brought this illness upon this body to convince the sceptics of the present age that the *Atman* is divine, that Godconsciousness is as true and practical today as it was in the Vedic period, that when one reaches perpection, freedom from all bondage is attained. My Divine Mother has shown through Her child what is meant by the various kinds of Yoga and how people of this age can attain to it. She has also shown that all scriptures are true, that all religions are like paths which lead to the same common goal of the one Infinite Divinity. All of my religious practices, Yoga practices, devotional exercises have been for the good of others and not for my own good. My Mother has set through this form a living example in this age.

"Whosoever will practise one-sixteenth part of what I have said and done, will surely attain to Godconsciousness in this life".

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SAYINGS OF RAMAKRISHNA

PREFACE

Sayings of Ramakrishna is an anthology of the precepts and parables of the Prophet of Dakshineswar, recorded by one of His Apostles, Swami Abhedananda. These precepts and parables were first published by Swami Abhedananda from the New York Vedanta Society in 1903 and was warmly appreciated by peoples of Europe and America. It was reprinted in 1920 from the San Francisco Vedanta Ashrama with some new additions and corrections by the Swami. The readers will find in this anthology the divine utterances of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, beautifully and systematically collected and compiled by His gifted disciple.

Sri Ramakrishna has said that men are born mainly of two tendencies, *vidya* and *avidya*. The *vidya* tendency leads men towards liberation or *mukti* and *avidya* tendency binds men with the worldly desires which are known as the chain of nescience or ignorance. "When born, both tendencies are in equilibriun like the scales of a balance. The world soon places its enjoyments and pleasures in one scale and the spirit and its attractions on the other, and if a man chooses the world, the worldly scale becomes very heavy and gravitates towards the earth, but if he chooses the spirit, the spiritual scale gravitates towards God". Swami Abhedananda says that Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are like the soft clay which easily takes a form of divine impressions and when a man comes in contact with those divine impressions, his mind is stained with the impressions and is purified and that purified mind prepares the ground of attaining Godconsciousness. Sri Ramakrishna's divine teachings were given in different occasions to different disciples and devotees for intensifying their desires of knowledge and wisdom and it is needless to mention that hundreds and thousands of seekers after Truth from different corners of the world have found the ways of solving their mysteries of life by the help of those teachings.

In the precepts and the parables of Sri Ramakrishna, we find a spirit of amity and a synthetic attitude that bring harmony among all religions and all religious faiths, and lead

all towards the ultimate goal which is realization of God, or the Absolute. His sayings also harmonize the ideals of Yoga, Jnana, Karma and Bhakti. and teach that the spiritual aspirants shall select an alternative path or spiritual practice and strive hard to reach the goal.

In the first chapter of *Sayings of Ramakrishna,* Swami Abhedananda has discussed about God, His Divine attributes, His existence, His nature, etc. He has said that though God has been conceived with form and without form, though God is both personal and impersonal and is meditated with attributes and without attributes, yet He is one with the absolute Brahman. He has discussed about *maya* and the Brahman and has said that Sri Ramakrishna teaches that *maya,* according to Advaita Vedanta, is unreal, because it has no permanent or lasting existence, because it is relative and dependent and is removed with the dawn of the Divine light of God-realization. The Swami says that Sri Ramakrishna has taught that God revealth Himself to the Sadhaka, if he resignates his petty self to the cosmic Self, the *Atman,* or the Brahman. The worship of images of gods or goddesses is not fruitless, but they help the sincere seekers after Truth to see God face to face. The images are the signs or symbols which direct the real substance, God. Patanjali has said: *'tasya vachakah pranavah'* i.e. the *pranava* (Omkara) is the pointer or discloser of the real essence of the Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna says: "If a man thinks of the images of gods and goddesses as symbols of the Divinity, he reaches the Divinity". God is in everything and He lives in the heart of every living being.

In the second chapter, Swami Abhedananda has dealt with the Saviours, the Sages and the Spiritual Teachers. Sri Ramakrishna says that the *Avataras* are the Incarnations of God and they descend on earth and live in the world with all living beings and help them to realize their ultimate goal. There are two classes of men, *Avatara* and *Siddha,* and there is a great distinction between them, as the *Avataras,* or the Saviours, incarnate and all are saved through His grace, whereas the *Siddhas,* or the emancipated souls, only save themselves with much pain and penence. But it should be remembered that human beings have no power to incarnate, but it is God alone who incarnates as the *Avataras* and saves the mankind.

The divine sages are like the inner circle of God's nearest relatives. They are like friends, companions, and kinsmen of the almighty God. They are great and noble, because they are above egoism, narrowness, and shortsightedness. They are above worldly attachments. They realize the immortal *Atman* and live in this world of diversity like the dead leaves. Sri Ramakrishna emphasised that each man needs a spiritual teacher or *Guru* to lead him in the path of spirituality. The *Guru* is the self-realized man and can open the spiritual eyes of all who sincerely practise spiritual *sadhana*. He can make the disciples free from the chain of nescience.

In the third chapter, Swami Abhedananda deals with the spiritual life of a man. Sri Ramakrishna has said that the spiritual life of a man begins when he awakes from the slumber of ignorance and knows the real nature of both *maya* and the Brahman, and knowing difference between the changing nature of *maya* and the unchanging nature of the Brahman, he rejects the unreal and accepts the real. In fact, unreality is *maya* or nescience and it deludes men and makes them forgetful of their essence and real existence. But Reality is the Truth or the Brahman-knowledge that dispels the darkness of ignorance and helps a man to realize, nay, recognize his real nature and existence which is no other than the immortal *Atman*, or the absolute Brahman.

Sri Ramakrishna says that ordinary mortals are attached to lust and gold, because they think that those things will console them and will give them permanent happiness and comfort. But when they come to know the unreality of those changing phenomenal things are dispelled through discrimination and meditation, they try to remove the attachment of lust and gold and love God and make their life blessed by the realization of the all-blissful Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly has instructed the worldly-minded men to take shelter under the sheds of discrimination and renunciation (*viveka* and *vairagya*) which will purify mind and make mind shine with pure intelligence for appreciating the absolute Brahman. It is quite true that the absolute Brahman is beyond the reach of mind and intelligence (*mana-buddhir pare*), but Sri Ramakrishna says that when mind is purified i.e. transformed into *shuddha-buddhi* or pure intelligence, then it shines like pure conscious-

ness (*shuddha-jnana*) which apprehends or appreciates the all-consciousness Brahman (*"mana-buddhir agochara, kintu shuddha-maner gochara"*). Advaita Vedanta says that the Brahman is apprehended by the shining light of intelligence (*buddhi*) and it happens that when the Brahman is reflected in the mirror of intelligence, nescience, associated with intelligence, is removed or replaced by pure consciousness and the self-luminous and self-revealing lusture of the absolute Brahman shines in its own undying glory. So Sri Ramakrishna instructs the neophite to seek solitude and stillness for making silent the modifications (*vrittis*) of mind, for the pure in heart see God.

Sri Ramakrishna has also explained the nature of the ascetics who renounce their hearth and home and dedicate their lives for the cause of God. The Siddhas, the Sadhus and the Sannyasins are they who maintain in them the *sadhu-vrittis* or good thoughts and good deeds, and make their sole aim and object the absolute Brahman. Concentration, meditation, and perseverance are necessary for attaining the Godconsciousness. Resignation to the will of God and Divine grace are also essential for the realization of the Absolute. Regarding Divine grace, Sri Ramakrishna has said that the wind of God's grace (*kripa-vatasa*) is incessantly blowing. Lazy sailors on this sea of life do not take advantage of it, but the active and the able always keep their minds unfurled to catch the friendly breeze and thus reach their destination very soon. As fans are discarded when the wind blows, so prayers and penances are discarded when the Divine grace of God descends. But sometimes men depend only upon *adrishta* or Providence neglecting *purushakara*. But that is not correct, because *adrishta* has a definite limit, whereas *purushakara* is limitless and by *purushakara* men can change the course of their life, so *purushakara* is indispensible in one's life for achieving success.

The fourth chapter contains the parables. Swami Abhedananda has included in the *Sayings of Ramakrishna* the parables which were given by Sri Ramakrishna in course of his different conversations. The parables of the alligator and the hunters, the Avadhutas and the angler, the Avadhuta and the bridal procession, the barber and seven jars of gold, the Brahmin and the low-cast servant, etc. have been noted. Total

fiftyone parables have been mentioned in this book. The parables are the genuine examples of the spiritual teachings and practices. In the end of each parable, there are some spiritual teachings which when followed bring blessings to the human life. As for example, a father was once passing by a field having his two sons with him. One he had taken up in his arms and the other was walking along with him holding his father's hand. They saw a kite flying and this boy, having let go his hold on his father's hand, began to clap with joy, crying, 'see papa, there is a kite'. But as he had let go the hold of his father's hand, he stumbled and got hurt. But the boy that was carried by the father also clapped his hands with joy, but did not fall as he was held by his father. The former represents self-help in spiritual life, while the latter indicates self-surrender.

The Swami has added an informative Index in the end of the book which will help the readers to keep in memory the whole teachings or sayings of Ramakrishna, along with the parables impregnated with spiritual fervour.

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

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FOREWORD

This volume will supply the demand of those whose interest in the unsectarian teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has been aroused by the Blessed Swami Vivekananda's celebrated work entitled *My Master.* It contains almost all of the valuable sayings of this great Hindu Saint of the nineteenth century, translated from Bengali in which the Bhagavan originally spoke.

An attempt has also been made for the first time to classify and arrange in logical sequence the Sayings which were published in the *Brahmavadin, The Awakened India,* as well as in the *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings* by Professor Max Müller, all having been carefully compared with the original and revised.

May these Sayings enlighten the minds and broaden the spiritual ideals of the Western nations in the same manner as they have done in the East is the earnest prayer of Sri Ramakrishna's disciple,

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA.

CHAPTER I

"Will you be able to practise as much as I tell you?
If you live up to one-sixteenth part of what I say unto you, you will surely reach the goal."

GOD

Existence of God

1. You see many stars at night in the sky but find them not when the sun rises; can you say that there are no stars in the heaven of day? So, O man, because you behold not God in the days of your ignorance and say not that there is no God.

2. Many are the names of God and infinite the forms that lead us to know Him. In whatsoever name or form you desire to call Him, in that very form and name you will see Him.

Oneness of God

3. As one and the same material, water, is called by different names by different peoples, one calling it water, another *eau,* a third *aqua,* and another *pani,* so the one Sat-chit-ananda, the everlasting Intelligence-Knowledge-Bliss, is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by some as Jehovah, by some as Hari, and by others as the Brahman.

4. In a potter's shop there are vessels of different shapes and forms,—pots, jars, dishes, plates, etc., but all are made of one clay. So God is one, but is worshipped in different ages and climes under different names and aspects.

5. *Q.* If in all the religious systems of the world there reigns the same God, then why does the same God appear different when viewed in different light by different religions?

God's Aspects Many

A. God is one, but many are His aspects. As one master of the house appears in various aspects, being father to one, brother to another and husband to a third, so one God is

described and called in various ways according to the particular aspect in which He appears to His particular worshipper.

6. As one can ascend to the top of a house by means of a ladder or a bamboo or a staircase or a rope, so divers are the ways and means to approach God, and every religion in the world shows one of these ways.

All Creeds Paths to God

7. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Almighty. Various and different are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kali at Kalighat (near Calcutta). Similarly, various are the ways that lead to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of such paths that lead to God.

8. As with one gold various ornaments are made, having different forms and names, so one and the same God is worshipped in different countries and ages under different forms and names. Though He may be worshipped in accordance with different conceptions and modes,—some loving to Him father, others mother, some calling Him friend, others calling Him the beloved, some praying to Him as the inmost treasure of their hearts, calling Him the sweet little child, yet it is one and the same God that is being worshipped in all these relations and modes.

9. As the young wife in a family shows her love and respect to her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and every other member of the family, and at the same time loves her husband more than these; similarly, being firm in thy devotion to the Deity of thy own choice (*Ishta-Devata*), do not despise other Deities, but honour them all.

10. Bow down and worship where others kneel, for where so many have been paying the tribute of adoration the kind Lord must manifest Himself, for He is all-mercy.

11. As the same sugar is made into various figures of birds and beasts, so the one Divine Mother is worshipped in various climes and ages under various names and forms.

God with Form and Formless

12. Two persons were hotly disputing as to the colour of a chameleon. One said: "The chameleon on that palm

tree is of a beautiful red colour." The other, contradicting him, said: "You are mistaken, the chameleon is not red but blue". Not being able to settle the matter by arguments, both went to the person who always lived under that tree and had watched the chameleon in all its phases of colour. One of them said: "Sir, is not the chameleon on that tree of a red colour?" The person replied: "Yes, sir". The other disputant said: "What do you say? How is it? It is not red, it is blue". That person again humbly replied: "Yes, sir". The person knew that the chameleon is an animal that constantly changes colour; thus it was that he said: 'yes' to both of these conflicting statements.

The *sat-chit-ananda* likewise has many forms. The devotee who has seen God in one aspect only, knows Him in that aspect alone. But he who has seen Him in manifold aspects is alone in a position to say: "All these forms are of one God and God is multiform". He is formless and with form, and many are His forms which no one knows.

13. Fire itself has no definite shape, but in glowing embers it assumes certain forms. The formless fire is then endowed with forms. Similarly the formless God sometimes invests Himself with definite forms.

14. So long as the sound of a bell is audible, it exists in the region of form; but when it is no longer heard, it has become formless. Similarly God is both with form and formless.

Nature of Brahman

15. *Q.* What is the nature of the Brahman?

A. The Brahman is without attributes, unchangeable, immovable, and firm like Mount Meru.

16. His name is Divine intelligence (*chinmaya*). His abode is Intelligence, and He, the Lord, is All-intelligence.

17. The Lord can pass an elephant through the eye of a needle. He can do whatever He likes.

18. As the sun is many times larger than the earth, but the distance makes it look like a very small disk, so the Lord is infinitely great, but being too far away from Him we fail to comprehend His real greatness.

19. God is the absolute eternal Brahman as well as the Father of the universe. The indivisible Brahman or pure Existence—Intelligence Bliss is like a vast shoreless ocean without bounds and limits, in which I only struggle and sink, but when I approach the always sportive personal Deity, Hari, I get peace like the sinking man who finds the shore.

Personal and Impersonal God

20. As water when congealed, becomes ice, so the visible form of the Almighty is the condensed manifestation of the all-pervading formless Brahman. It may be called, in fact, Sat-chit-ananda solidified. As ice is part and parcel of water, remains in water and afterwards melts in it; so the personal God is part and parcel of the Impersonal. He rises from the Impersonal, remains there, and ultimately merges into It and disappears.

21. God is formless and God is with form too, and He is that which transcends both form and formlessness. He alone can say what else He is.

22. At a certain stage of his path of devotion the devotee finds satisfaction in God with form; at another stage, in God without form.

23. The God with form is visible, nay, we can see Him face to face, as with one's dearest friend.

24. As the same fish is dressed into soup, curry, or cutlet and each has his own choice dish of it, so the Lord of the universe, though one, manifests Himself differently or as many, according to different likings of His worshippers and each one of these has his own view of God which he values the most. To some, He is a kind master, or a living father, or a sweet smiling mother, or a devoted friend and to others a faithful husband or a dutiful and obliging son.

Maya and the Brahman

25. *Q.* What is the relation between *maya* and the Brahman?

A. *Maya* may be compared to a snake that is active and moving, while the Brahman is like the snake absolutely still.

Maya is the name of the manifested powers of the Absolute and immovable Reality, which is called the Brahman.

26. Falling in the meshes of phenomena, the ever-blissful Brahman appears to weep and wail.

27. In the course of the instructions to his disciple, the *Guru* raised two fingers by which he meant the duality of the Brahman and *maya,* then lowering one finger, he taught him that when *maya* vanishes, nothing of the universe remains but the one absolute Brahman.

28. Who could have realized the absolute Brahman if there were no *maya* and her manifestations ?

Brahman Cannot be Described by Words

29. *Q.* Can the Brahman be described ?

A. It cannot be explained by words. As a man called upon to give an idea of the ocean to a person who has never seen it, can only say: 'It is a vast sheet of water, a big expanse of water, it is water-water all around' ; so one who has realized the Brahman can only say: The Brahman is everywhere'.

30. He who tries to give an idea of God by mere book-learning, is like the man who tries to give an idea of Kasi (Varanasi) by means of a map or picture.

31. The Vedas, Tantras, and the Puranas and all the sacred scriptures of the world have become as if defiled (as food thrown out of the mouth becomes poluted), because they have been constantly repeated by and have come out of human mouths. But the Brahman or the Absolute has never been defiled, for no one as yet has been able to express it by human speech.

God with and without Attributes

32. At one time I am clothed, at another naked, so Brahman is at one time with attributes and at another without.

33. God is like unto a hill of sugar. A small ant carries away from it a small grain of sugar, a bigger one takes from it a considerably larger grain. But the hill remains as large as before. So are the devotees of God. They become ecstatic with even a grain of one Divine attribute. No one can contain within him all His attributes.

God and Soul

34. *Q.* God is infinite, the creature or *jiva* a finite being. How then can the finite grasp the Infinite?

A. It is like a figure of salt trying to fathom the depths of the ocean. In doing so the salt doll is dissolved into the sea and lost. Similarly, the *jiva,* in trying to measure God, loses his individual egoism and becomes one with Him.

35. As a piece of lead thrown into a basin of mercury soon becomes dissolved, so the individual soul melts away, losing its limitations, when it falls into the ocean of the Brahman.

Relation between Individual Ego and Supreme Spirit

36. *Q.* What is the relation between the individual ego (*Jivatman*) and the Supreme Spirit (*Paramatman*)?

A. As when a plank of wood is stretched across a current of water, the water seems to be divided into two, so the indivisible appears divided into two by the limitations (*upadhi*) of *maya.* In fact they are one and the same.

37. The soul enchained is 'man' (*Jiva*) and free from chains is 'God' (Siva).

38. As the water and its bubble are one: the bubble has its birth in the water, floats on the water, and ultimately is resolved into water; so the individual ego (*Jivatman*) and the supreme Spirit (*Paramatman*) are one and the same. The difference is in degree, the one is finite and small, the other is infinite; the one is dependent, the other independent.

39. So long as one is not blessed with the Divine vision, so long as the base metal is not turned into gold by touching the philosopher's stone, there will be the delusion of 'I am the doer', and so long must there necessarily remain the idea of the distinction between 'I have done this good work, and I have done that bad work'. This idea of duality or distinction is the *maya* which is responsible for the continuance of the world current. By taking refuse in *vidya-maya* (the *maya* having preponderance of *sattva*), which follows the adoption of the right path, one can reach Him. He alone crosses the ocean of

maya who comes face to face with God, who realizes Him. He is truly free, living in this body, who knows that God is the doer and the non-doer.

40. What is the nature of the union of the *Jivatman* (human soul) and the *Paramatman* (supreme Spirit)? It is like the union of the hour and the minute mands at twelve o'clock.

41. God is in all men but all men are not in God: that is the reason why they suffer.

God Related to Man

42. God is related to man as magnet is to iron. Why does not then God attract man? As iron thick imbedded in mud is not moved by the attraction of the magnet, so the soul thickly imbedded in *maya* feels not the attraction of the Lord. But as when the mud is washed away with water the iron is free to move, so when the soul by constant tears of prayer and repentance washes away the mud of *maya* that makes it cleave to the earth, it is soon attracted by the Lord.

43. The magnetic needle always points towards the north, and hence it is that the sailing vessel does not lose her course. So long as the heart of man is directed towards God, he cannot be lost in the ocean of worldliness.

44. The loadstone rock hidden under the sea attracts the ship sailing over it, draws out all its iron nails, separates plank from plank, and sinks the vessel into the sea. Even so, when the magnet of Godconsciousness attracts the human soul, it destroys in a moment man's sense of earthly personality and selfishness and plunges the soul into the ocean of God's infinite Love.

45. As a lamp does not burn without oil, so man cannot live without God.

Yearning for God

46. Verily, verily, I say unto you that he who yearns for God finds Him.

47. He finds God quickest whose yearning and concentration are greatest.

48. Like unto a miser that longeth after gold, let thy heart pant after Him.

49. Men weep rivers of tears because a son is not born to them, others wear away their hearts with sorrow because they cannot get riches. But how many are there who weep and sorrow because they have not seen God? He finds who seeks Him; he who with intense longing weeps for God has found God.

50. As the child beseeches its mother with importunities for toys and pice, weeping and teasing her, so he who knows God to be his nearest and dearest, his own, and who like an innocent child weeps inwardly with earnestness to see Him, is rewarded at last with the vision of Divine beauty. God can no longer remain hidden from such an earnest and importunate seeker after Him.

51. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, he who longs for Him, finds Him. Go and verify this in thine own life; try for three consecutive days with genuine earnestness and thou art sure to succeed.

52. "I must attain to perfection in this life, yea, in three days I must find God; nay, with a single utterance of His name I will draw Him unto me". With such a violent love the Lord is attracted soon. The lukewarm lovers take ages to go to Him, if at all.

53. What offering is required to attain to God? To find God, thou must offer Him thy body, mind, and riches.

Search after God

54. A thief enters a dark room and feels the various articles therein. He lays his hand upon a table, perhaps, and saying, 'not this' (*neti*), passes on; he comes in contact with some other article—a chair, perhaps—and again saying, 'not this' he continues his search, till leaving article after article, he finally lays his hand on the box containing the treasure; then he exclaims, 'it is here', and there his search ends. Such is indeed the search after the Brahman.

55. Adopt adequate means for the end you seek to attain. You cannot get butter by crying yourself hoarse saying: "There is butter in the milk". If you wish to make butter, turn the milk into its curds and churn it well, and then you will get butter. So, if you seek to see God, practise spiritual *sadhana*

(devotional exercises) and then you will see God. What is the good of merely crying: "O God, O God!"

56. Be diluted in the Supreme Spirit.

57. Meditate on God either in an unknown corner, or in the solitude of forests, or within your own mind.

58. *Q.* Should we pray aloud to God?

A. Pray unto Him in any way you like. He is sure to hear you, for He can hear even the footfall of an ant.

59. So long as a man calls aloud: "Allah Ho! Allah Ho!" (O God! O God!), be sure that he has not yet found his Allah (God), for he who has found Him becomes quiet and full of peace.

60. *Q.* Where is the Lord and how is He to be found?

A. There is pearl in the deep sea, but one must hazard all perils to get it. So is the Lord in this world.

61. If a single dive into the sea does not bring to you the pearl, do not conclude that the sea is without pearls. Dive again and again and you are sure to be rewarded in the end. So, if your first attempt to see God proves fruitless, do not lose heart. Persevere in the attempt and you are sure to obtain Divine grace at last.

62. *Q.* How may we find our God?

A. The angler, anxious to hook a big and beautiful *Rohita* fish, waits calmly for hours together, having thrown the bait and the hook into the water and watching patiently until the bait is caught by the fish. Similarly, the devotee who patiently goes on with his devotion, is sure at last to find his God.

How to See God?

63. *Q.* If God is omnipresent, why do we not see Him?

A. Standing by the bank of a pool thickly overspread with scum and weeds, you will say that there is no water in it. If you desire to see the water, remove the scum from the surface of the pond. With eyes covered with the film of *maya* you complain that you cannot see God. If you wish to see Him, remove the film of *maya* from your eyes.

64. As the cloud covers the sun, so *maya* conceals the Deity. When the cloud moves away, the sun is seen; so when *maya* is removed, God becomes visible.

65. As fish playing in a pond covered with reeds and scum cannot be seen from outside, so God plays in the heart of a man invisibly, being screened by *maya* from human view.

66. God cannot be seen so long as there is the slightest taint of desire; therefore, have thy small desires satisfied, and renounce the big desires by right reasoning and discrimination.

67. None can enter the kingdom of Heaven if there be the least trace of desire in him, just as a thread can never enter in the eye of a needle if there be any slight detached fibre at its end.

68. As to approach a monarch one must ingratiate oneself with the officials who keep the gate and surround the throne. So to reach the Almighty one must practise many devotions, as well as serve many devotees and keep company of the wise.

69. The intoxication of hemp is not to be had by repeating the word 'hemp'. Get the hemp, rub it with water into a solution and drink it, and you will get intoxicated. What is the use of loudly crying: "O God, O God?" Regularly practise devotion and verily you shall see God.

Name of The Lord

70. The truly devotional and spiritual practice suited to this Kali Yuga (Iron Age) is the constant repetition of the name of the Lord of Divine love.

71. If thou wishest to see God, have firm faith in the efficacy of repeating the name of Hari (Lord) and try to discriminate between the real and the unreal.

72. Consciously or unconsciously, in whatever way one falls into the trough of nectar, one becomes immortal. Similarly, whosoever utters the name of the Deity voluntarily or involuntarily finds immortality in the end.

73. It is the nature of the lamp to give light. With its help some may cook food, some may forge a deed, and the third may read the word of God. So, with the help of the Lord's name some try to attain salvation, others try to serve their evil purposes and so on. His holy name, however, remains unaffected.

74. Knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, in whatever state we utter God's name, we acquire the merit of such an utterance. As a man who voluntarily goes to a river and bathes therein, gets the benefit of the bath; so does he too who has been pushed into the water by another, or who, when sleeping soundly, has water thrown upon him.

He Who has Seen the Lord

75. The truly wise man is he who has seen the Lord. He becomes like a child. The child, no doubt, seems to have an *ahankara* or an egoism of its own, but that egoism is a mere appearance; it is not selfish egotism. The self of a child is nothing like the self of a grown-up man.

76. The self (*aham*) of the child is again like the face reflected in the mirror. The face in the mirror looks exactly like the real face; only it does to nobody any harm.

77. *Q.* Will all men see God?

A. No man will remain in total fast; some get their food at 9 A.M., others at noon, others at 2 P.M., and others in the evening at sunset. Similarly, at some time or other, in this life or after many lives, all will see God.

God Revealeth Himself

78. The watchman can see with a dark lantern (bull's eye) every one on whom he throws its rays, but no one can see him so long as he does not turn the light upon himself. So does God see every one, but no one seeth Him until the Lord revealeth Himself to one in His mercy.

79. *Q.* Why can we not see the Divine Mother?

A. She is like a high-born Hindu lady transacting all Her business from behind the screen, seeing all but seen by none. Her devout sons only see Her, by going near Her behind the screen of *maya*.

80. A mother has several children. To one she has given a bit of coral, to another a doll, and to a third some sweets, and thus, absorbed in their playthings they all forget their mother; and she in the meanwhile goes on with her household work. But among them the child who throws away his playthings and cries after the mother, Mamma, dear Mamma—she

runs quickly to him, takes him in her arms and caresses him. So, O man! you have forgotten your Divine Mother, absorbed in the vanities of the world; but when you throw them off crying after Her, She will come at once and take you up in Her arms.

81. Oh heart! Call out truly to thy Almighty Mother, and thou shalt see how She will come quickly running to thee. When one calls out to God with all one's heart and soul, He can no longer remain unmoved.

God Accepts Humblest Offering

82. The landlord may be very rich, but when a poor *rayot* brings a humble present to him with a loving heart, he accepts it with the greatest pleasure. So the Almighty God, though so great and powerful, accepts the humblest offerings of a sincere heart with the greatest pleasure and kindness.

83. Howsoever far may be the fish in a pond, when sweet, attractive and savoury bait is thrown into the water, they soon hasten to that point from all quarters. Similarly, the Lord quickly approaches the holy devotee whose heart is full of devotion and faith.

God's Advent in Human Heart

84. *Q.* What are the indications of God's advent in the human heart?

A. As the dawn heralds the rising sun, so unselfishness, purity and righteousness precede the advent of the Lord.

85. As a king, before going to the house of a servant to receive hospitality there, sends from his stores the necessary seats, ornaments, articles of food, etc., to the servant so that this latter may properly receive and honour his master; so before the Lord cometh, He sendeth love, reverence and faith into the yearning heart of the devotee.

God-vision

86. *Q.* In what condition of the mind does God-vision take place?

A. God is seen when the mind is tranquil. When the mental sea is agitated by the wind of desires, it cannot reflect God, and then God-vision is impossible.

87. So long as the heavenly expanse of the heart is troubled and disturbed by the gusts of desire, there is little chance of our beholding therein the brightness of God. The beatific vision occurs only in the heart which is calm and rapt in Divine Communion.

88. God is attained when man reaches maturity in either of these three states: (1) "All this am I", (2) "All this art Thou", (3) "Thou the master and I the servant".

89. As the woman who is fully devoted to her husband is called Sati (chaste) and obtains the love of her lord, so the man who is fully devoted to his special Deity obtains God.

He Who hath Beheld God Doeth No Evil.

90. The steel sword is turned into a golden sword by the touch of the philosopher's stone, and though it retains its former form, it becomes incapable of injuring any one like the steel sword. Similarly, the outward form of the man who has touched the feet of the Almighty is not changed, but he no longer doeth any evil.

91. The Lord he has seen and he is now a changed being.

92. So long as a man is far away from the market, he hears only a loud and indistinct buzzing sound like Ho! Ho! But when he enters the market-place, he no longer hears the uproar, but perceives distinctly that some one is bargaining for potato, another for brinjal and so on. As long as man is far away from God, so long is he in the midst of the buzzing noise and confusion of reasoning, argument and discussion ; but when he approaches God, then cease all reasoning, argument and discussion, and he understands the mysteries of God with clear and vivid perception.

Seer of God Unaffected by the World

93. In the play of hide and seek, if the player succeeds in touching the non-player who is called grand-dame (*boori*), he is no longer liable to be made a thief by the seeker. Similarly, by once seeing the Almighty, a man is no longer bound down by the fetters of the world. Just as the person touching the *boori* is free to go about wherever he chooses without being pursued and made a thief of, so also in this world's playground

there is no fear for him who has touched the feet of the Almighty. He attains freedom from all worldly cares and anxieties and nothing can ever bind him again.

94. Milk mixes readily with water when brought into contact with it. Convert it into butter, however, and it no longer mixes with the water but floats upon it. So, when the soul once attains the state of God, it may live in constant and hourly contact with innumerable unregenerate souls but will not at all be affected by their evil association.

95. Iron, if once converted into gold by the touch of the philosopher's stone, may be kept under the ground or thrown into a rubbish heap; it always remains gold and will never return to its former condition. Similar is the state of him who has at heart touched even once the feet of the Almighty. Whether he dwells in the bustle of the world or in the solitude of the forest, nothing will ever contaminate him.

He Who Knows God Is Indifferent to Worldly Pleasures

96. He who has once tasted the refined and crystalline sugar-candy, finds no pleasure in raw treacle; he who has slept in a palace will not find pleasure in lying down in a dirty hovel. So the soul that has once tasted the sweetness of the Divine Bliss finds no delight in the ignoble pleasures of the world.

97. She who has a king for her lover will not accept the homage of a street beggar. So the soul that has once found favour in the sight of the Lord does not want the paltry things of this world.

98. A recently married young woman remains deeply absorbed in the performance of domestic duties so long as no child is born to her. But no sooner a son is born to her than she begins to neglect household details and does not find much pleasure in them. Instead thereof, she fondles the new-born baby all the life-long days and kisses it with intense joy. Thus man in his state of ignorance is ever busy in the performance of all sorts of works, but as soon as he sees in his heart the Almighty, he finds no pleasure in them. On the contrary, his happiness consists now only in serving God and doing His works. He no longer finds happiness in any other occupation

and cannot withdraw himself from the ecstasy of that Holy Communion.

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD

99. Knowledge and love of God are ultimately one and the same. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love.

100. The knowledge of God (*jnana*) may be likened to a man, while the love of God (*bhakti*) is like a woman. Knowledge has entry upto the outer rooms of God, but no one can enter the inner apartments (the zenana) of God save love, which has access into the mysteries of the Almighty.

101. Siva and Sakti (The Absolute and the Energy) are both necessary for creation. With dry clay no potter can make a vessel, when water is necessary. So Siva alone cannot create without Sakti or Energy.

WORSHIP OF IMAGES

102. As a toy fruit or a toy elephant reminds one of the real fruit and the living animal, so do the images worshipped remind one of God who is formless and eternal.

103. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, addressing Keshab Chandra Sen who was a great iconoclast in his day, said: "Why do these images raise the idea of mud and clay, stone and straw in your mind? Why can you not realize the presence of the eternal, blissful, all-conscious Mother even in these forms? Know these images to be concretized forms of the eternal and formless essence of all sentiency".

104. If a man thinks of the images of gods and goddesses as symbols of the Divinity, he reaches the Divinity. But if he considers them as mere idols made of stone, straw and clay, to him the worship of those images produceth no good.

GOD IN EVERYTHING

105. The master said: "Everything that exists is God". The pupil understood it literally, but not in the right spirit. While he was passsing through the street he met an elephant. The driver (*mahout*) shouted aloud from his high place: "Move

away!" The pupil argued in his mind: "Why should I move away? I am God, so is the elephant God; what fear has God from Himself?" Thinking thus, he did not move. At last the elephant took him up in his trunk and dashed him aside. He was hurt severely and going back to his master, he related the whole adventure. The master said: "All right. You are God, the elephant is God also, but God in the shape of the elephant-driver was warning you from above. Why did you not pay heed to his warning?"

106. We cannot say that God is gracious, because He feeds us, for every father is bound to supply his children with food, but when He keeps us from going astray and holds us back from temptations, then He is truly gracious.

Man's Redemption

107. It is the nature of the child to soil itself with dirt and mud, but the mother does not allow it to remain dirty always; she washes it from time to time. So it is the nature of man to commit sin, but sure as it is that he commits sin, it is doubly sure that the Lord creates means for his redemption.

108. The darkness of centuries is dispersed at once as soon as a light is brought into the room. The accumulated sins of innumerable births vanish before a single gracious glance of the Almighty.

God within Man

109. Pointing to the heart, the Bhagavan used to say: "He who has it here, has it also there (pointing to the external world). He who does not find God within himself will never find Him outside himself. But he who sees Him in the temple of his soul, sees Him also in the temple of the universe".

CHAPTER II

SAVIOURS, SAGES AND SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

"Mother! destroy in me all idea that I am great, and that I am a Brahmin, and that they are low and pariahs, for who are they but Thou in so many forms?

Saviour and Messenger of God

110. The *Avatara* or Saviour is the messenger of God. He is like the viceroy of a mighty monarch. As when there is some disturbance in a far-off province, the king sends his viceroy to quell it, so whenever there is a decline of religion in any part of the world, God sends His *Avatara* there.

111. It is one and the same *Avatara* that, having plunged into the ocean of life, rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, and diving down again rises in another place and is known as Christ.

112. The *Avataras* (like Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ) stand in relation to the absolute Brahman as the waves of the ocean are to the ocean.

113. When Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra came to this world, seven sages only could recognize Him to be the God-Incarnate. So, when God descends into this world, few only can recognize His Divine nature.

114. None knoweth the immensity of the sacrifice which the Godhead maketh when It becomes incarnate in a human form.

Redeeming Power of Saviours

115. In some seasons water can be obtained from the great depths of the wells only, and with great difficulty, but when the country is flooded in the rainy season, water is obtained with ease everywhere. So, ordinarily, God is reached by saints with great pains through prayers and penances. But when the flood of Incarnation descends, Divine manifestation is seen anywhere and everywhere, and by His grace everybody is saved.

116. As a large and powerful steamer moves swiftly over the water, towing along flats and barges in its wake; so, when a Saviour descends, He easily carries thousands across the ocean of *maya*.

117. The locomotive engine reaches the destination itself and also draws and takes with it a long train of loaded wagons. So, likewise act the Saviours; they carry multitudes of men heavily laden with sin into the presence of the Almighty.

Saviours Many

118. On the tree of absolute existence-knowledge-bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*) there hang innumerable Ramas, Krishnas, Buddhas, Christs, etc., out of which one or two come down to this world now and then and produce mighty changes and revolutions.

119. Think not that Sita, Rama, Sri Krishna, Radha, Arjuna, etc., were not historical personages, but mere allegories, or that the scriptures have an inner and esoteric meaning only. Nay, they were beings of flesh and blood just as you are, but because they were the Divinities, their lives can be interpreted both historically and spiritually.

120. There is a fabled species of birds called Homa, which live so high up in the heavens, and so dearly love those regions, that they never condescend to come down to the earth. Even their eggs, which when laid in the sky begin to fall down to the earth attracted by gravity, are said to get hatched in the middle of their downward course and give birth to the young ones. The fledgelings at once find out that they are falling down and immediately change their course and begin to fly upwards towards their home, drawn thither by instinct. Men such as Sukadeva, Narada, Jesus, Sankaracharya, and others, are like those birds, who even in their boyhood give up all attachments to the things of this world and betake themselves to the highest regions of true knowledge and divine light.

121. As the elephant has two sets of teeth, the external tusks and the inner grinders, so the God-men like Sri Krishna and others act and live like common men to the view of all, while their souls rest far beyond the pale of *karma*.

122. *Q.* When the Jews nailed the body of Jesus on the Cross, how was it that Jesus, in spite of so much pain and suffering, prayed that they should be forgiven?

A. When an ordinary cocoanut is pierced through, the nail enters the kernel of the nut too; but in the case of the dry nut the kernel becomes separate from the shell and when the shell is pierced, the kernel is not touched. Jesus was like the dry cocoanut, i.e., His inner soul was separate from His physical shell, consequently the sufferings of the body did not affect Him. Though the nails were driven through and through, He could pray with peace and tranquillity for the good of His enemies.

Avataras and Siddhas

123. There are two sorts of men. The *Guru* said to one of his disciples: "What I impart to thee, my dear, is invaluable, keep it to thyself"; and the disciple kept it to himself. But when the *Guru* imparted that knowledge to another of his disciples, the latter, knowing its inestimable worth and not liking to enjoy it alone, stood upon a high place and began to declare the good tidings to all the people. The *Avataras* are of the latter class, while the *Siddhas* (perfect ones) are of the former.

124. When the flood comes, it inundates rivers and streams and makes one watery surface of all adjacent lands; but the rain water flows away of itself through fixed channels. When a Saviour incarnates, all are saved through His grace. The *Siddhas* (perfect ones) only save themselves with much pain and penance.

125. A *siddha Purusha* (perfect man) is like an archæologist who removes the dust and lays open an old well which has been covered up during ages of disuse by rank growth. The *Avatara*, on the other hand, is like an engineer who sinks a new well in a place where there was no water before. Great men can give salvation to those only who have the water of piety hidden in themselves, but the Saviour saves him too whose heart is devoid of all love and dry as a desert.

126. When a mighty raft of wood floats down a stream, it carries on hundreds and does not sink. A reed, floating

down, may sink with the weight of even a crow. So, when a Saviour incarnates, innumerable are the men who find salvation by taking refuge under Him. The *Siddha* only saves himself with much toil and trouble.

127. What is the state which a *Siddha* attains ? (A perfect man and well-cooked food are both called *Siddha.* There is a pun here on the word *Siddha*).

As potato or brinjal when *siddha,* i.e., when boiled properly, becomes soft and pulpy; so, a man when becomes *Siddha,* i.e., reaches perfection, is seen to be all humility and tenderness.

Kinds of Siddhas

128. Five are the kinds of *Siddhas* found in this world:

(1) The *svapna-Siddhas* are those who attain perfection by means of a sacred *mantram* or formula.

(2) The *mantra-Siddhas* are those who attain perfection by means of a sacred *mantram* or formula.

(3) The *hathat-Siddhas* are those who attain perfection suddenly, like a poor man who suddenly becomes rich by finding a hidden treasure or by marrying into a rich family; so, many sinners become pure all of a sudden and enter the kingdom of Heaven.

(4) The *kripa-Siddhas* are those who attain perfection through the tangible grace of the Almighty, as a poor man is made wealthy by kindness of the king.

(5) The *nitya-Siddhas* are those who are ever perfect. As a gourd or a pumpkin creeper brings forth fruit first and then its flowers, so the ever-perfect soul is already born a *Siddha* and all his seeming exertions after perfection are merely for the sake of setting examples to humanity.

129. *Q.* Is it possible for a human soul to obtain the condition of absolute union with God when he is able to say *so'ham,* 'He is I ?' If so, how ?

A. This is just like the case of an old servant of a house who in course of time comes to be counted as a member of the family. When the master of the house becomes very

much pleased with the servant's work, he one day takes it into his fancy and gives him his own seat of honour, saying to all the members of the household: "Henceforth there shall be no difference between him and me. He and I are one. Obey his commands as ye do mine, and he who fails to do so, disobeys my orders and will be punished for it." Even though the servant may hesitate through modesty to occupy the seat, yet the master compels him to take the seat of honour. Similar to this is the condition of souls who reach the state of *so'ham*, 'He is I'. When they serve the Lord for a long time, He graciously endows some of them with all His glory and attributes and raises them to His own seat of universal sovereignty.

Divine Sages

130. The divine Sages form, as it were, the inner circle of God's nearest relatives. They are like friends, companions, and kinsmen of God. Ordinary beings form the outer circle or are the creatures of God.

131. The sage alone can recognize a sage. He who deals in cotton-twists can alone tell of what number and quality a particular twist is.

132. A sage was lying in a deep state of *samadhi* by a roadside; a thief passing by saw him and thought within himself: "This fellow lying here is a thief. He has been breaking into some house by night and now sleeps exhausted. The police will very soon be here to catch him. So let me escape in time." Thus thinking, he ran away. Soon after a drunkard came upon the sage and said: "Hallo! thou hast fallen into the ditch by taking a peg too much. I am steadier than thou and am not going to tumble." Last of all there came a sage, and understanding that a great sage was in *samadhi*, he sat down, touched him reverently, and began to rub gently his holy feet.

Perfect Man Unpolluted by World

133. A perfect man is like a lotus leaf in the water or like a mud-fish in the marsh. Neither of these is polluted by the element in which it lives.

134. As an aquatic bird, such as a pelican, dives into water, but the water does not wet its plumage, so the emancipated soul lives in the world, but the world does not affect him.

135. The swan can separate the pure milk from the water with which it has been mixed; it drinks only the milk, leaving the water untouched. Other birds cannot do so. So, God is intimately mixed up with *maya;* ordinary men cannot see Him separately from *maya.* Only the Paramahamsa (the Great Soul) here is a pun on the word *hamsa,* which means both soul and swan) rejects *maya* and takes up God only.

Great Souls Retain Only Semblance of Egoism

136. Some great souls who have reached the seventh or the highest plane of *samadhi* and have thus become merged in Godconsciousness, are pleased to come down from that spiritual height for the good of mankind. They keep the ego of knowledge (the *aham* of *vidya*) or, in other words, the higher Self. But this ego is a mere appearance; it is like a line drawn across a sheet of water.

137. After the attainment of *samadhi* some have the ego —the ego of the servant, the ego of the devotee. Sankaracharya kept the ego of *vidya* (knowledge) for the teaching of others.

138. The Master's talk with a disciple:

Master: Have I any *abhimana* (egoism)?

Disciple: Yes, a little and that little has been kept with a view to the following objects: first, the preservation of the body; second, the culture of *bhakti* or devotion to God; third, the desire to mix in the company of the Bhaktas (devotees); fourth, the desire to give instruction to others. At the same time it must be said that you have kept it only after a good deal of prayer. My idea is that the natural state of your soul is capable of being described only by the word *samadhi.* Hence I say that the *abhimana* or egoism that you possess is the result of prayer.

Master: Yes, but it is not I that have kept it (this self) but it is my Divine Mother. It lies with my Divine Mother to grant the prayer.

139. Hanuman was blessed with the vision of God, both *sakara* and *nirakara* (with form and without form). But he

retained the ego of a servant of God. Such was also the case with Narada, Sanaka, Sananda. and Sanatkumara.

(Here the question was asked if Narada and others were the Bhaktas only and not Jnanis too. The Bhagavan said:)

Narada and others had attained the highest knowledge (*Brahmajnana*). But still they went on like the murmuring water of the rivulet talking and singing. This shows that they too kept the ego of knowledge—a slight trace of individuality to mark their separate existence from the Deity,—for the purpose of teaching others the saving of truths of religion.

140. As a rope that is burnt retains its form intact, but, being all ash, nothing can be bound with it; so the man who is emancipated retains merely the form of the egoism, but no idea of self (*ahankara*).

141. When the head of a goat is severed from its body, the trunk moves about for some time, still showing the signs of life. Similarly, though the *ahankara* (egoism) is beheaded in the perfect man, yet sufficient of its vitality is left to make such a man carry on the functions of physical life; but that much is not sufficient to bind him again to the world.

142. Ornaments cannot be made of pure gold. Some alloy must be mixed with it. A man totally devoid of *maya* will not survive more than twenty-one days. So long as the man has a body, he must have some *maya,* however small it may be, to carry on the functions of the body.

143. The wind carries the odour of the sandalwood as well as that of ordure, but does not mix with either. The emancipated soul in the same way lives in the world but does not mix with it.

Preaching of Perfect Ones

144. When a fire burns the moths come, one knows not whence, and they fall into it and die. The fire is not seen to invite the moth to its fate. Similar to this is the preaching of the perfect ones. They do not go about calling others, but hundreds come to them of their own accord, no one knows whence, to get instruction from them.

145. Hast thou got, O preacher, the badge of authority? As the humblest servant of the king authorized by him is heard

with respect and awe and can quell the riot by showing his badge; so must thou, O preacher, obtain first the order and inspiration from God. So long as thou hast not this badge of Divine inspiration, thou mayest preach all thy life, but only in vain.

146. What is true preaching like? Instead of preaching to others, if one worships God all that time, that is enough preaching. He who strives to make himself free, is the real preacher. Hundreds come from all sides, no one knows whence, to him is free, and are taught by him. When a rose-bud blooms, the bees come from all sides uninvited and unasked.

147. Throw an unbaked cake of flour into hot *ghee* (butter), it will make a sort of boiling noise. But the more it is fried, the less becomes the noise; and when it is fully fried, the bubbling ceases altogether. So long as a man has little knowledge, he goes about lecturing and preaching, but when the perfection of knowledge is obtained, man ceases to make vain displays.

Spiritually Undeveloped as Preachers

148. *Q.* What do you think of the man who is a good orator and preacher, but whose spirituality is undeveloped?

A. He is like a person who squanders another's property kept in trust with him. He can easily advise others, for it costs him nothing, as the ideas he expresses are not his own but borrowed.

149. *Q.* What is your opinion about the methods employed by the present-day religious preachers?

A. It is like inviting a hundred persons to a dinner when the food supply is sufficient for only one. It is pretending to be a great religious teacher with a small stock of spiritual experience.

150. As many have merely heard of snow but not seen it, so many are the religious preachers who have read only in books about the attributes of God, but have not realized them in their lives. And as many have seen but not tasted it, so many are the religious teachers who have got only a glimpse of Divine glory, but have not understood its real essence. He who only has tasted the snow, can say what it is like. Similarly,

he alone can describe the attributes of God, who has associated with Him in His different aspects, now as a servant of God, then as a friend of God, then as a lover of God, or as being absorbed in Him.

God, the One Source of All Teaching

151. The light of the gas-lamp illumines various localities with varying intensity, but the life of the light, namely, the gas, comes from one common reservoir. So, the religious teachers of all ages and climes are but so many lamp-posts through which is emitted the light of the spirit flowing constantly from the almighty source.

152. As the rain water, falling upon the roof of a house, flows down to the ground through pipes having their mouth-pieces shaped like the head of a tiger or a bull and appears to come out of tigers' mouths, but in reality it descends from the sky; even so the eternal truths that come out of the mouths of godly men are not uttered by those men themselves, but in reality they descend from the Kingdom of the Heaven.

Prophet without Honour at Home

153. What is the reason that a Prophet is not honoured by his own kinsmen? The kinsmen of a juggler do not crowd round him to see his performances while strangers stand a-gape at his wonderful tricks.

154. The seeds of *vajravantul* do not fall to the bottom of the tree. They are carried by wind far-off and take the root there. So, the spirit of a Prophet manifests itself at a distance and he is appreciated there.

155. There is always a shadow under the lamp while its light illumines the surrounding objects. So, the men in the immediate proximity of a Prophet do not understand him. Those who live far-off are charmed by his spirit and extra-ordinary power.

156. The Divine power must be understood to be in greater quantity in those who are honoured, respected and obeyed by a large followers than that in those who have no such influence.

Good and Holy Sadhus Alone Reflect Divine Light

157. The sunlight is one and the same wherever it falls, but only bright surfaces like water, mirrors and polished metals can reflect it fully. So is the Divine light. It falls equally and impartially on all hearts, but only the pure and clean hearts of the good and holy Sadhus (holy ones) can fully reflect it.

158. He alone is the real man who is illumined by the light of true knowledge. Others are men in name.

159. That knowledge which purifies the intellect, is the true knowledge, everything else is non-knowledge.

Society of the Pious

160. The companionship of the holy and the wise is one of the main elements of spiritual progress.

161. The society of pious men is like the water in which rice is washed. The rice-water dissipates intoxication. So, doth the society of the pious relieve worldly men, intoxicated with the wine of desire, from their intoxication.

162. How should one pass one's life ? As the fire on the hearth is stirred from time to time with a poker to make it burn brightly and prevent it from going out, so the mind should be invigorated occasionally by the society of the pious.

163. The agent of a rich Zemindar, when he goes into the mofussil or interior, tyrannizes in various ways the tenants. But when he comes back to the headquarter under the eyes of his master, he changes his ways, becomes very pious, treats the tenants kindly, investigates all their grievances fully, and tries to mete out impartial justice to all. The tyrannical agent becomes good through the fear of the landlord and by the effect of his society. Similarly, doth the society of the pious make even the wicked righteous, awakening awe and reverence within them.

164. The moist wood placed upon a fire soon becomes dry and ultimately begins to burn. Similarly, the society of the pious drives away the moisture of greed and lust from the hearts of worldly men and women, and then the fire of *viveka* (discrimination) burns within them.

165. As the blacksmith keeps alive the fire of his furnace

by occasional blowing of his bellows, so the mind should be kept burning by the society of the pious.

Guru or Spiritual Teacher

166. If thou art in right good earnest to be good and perfect, God will send the proper Master (*sad-Guru*) to thee. Earnestness is the only thing necessary.

167. So long as the mind is unsteady and fickle, it availeth nothing, even though a man has got a good and perfect *Guru* and the company of holy men.

168. The fabled pearl-oyster leaves its bed at the bottom of the sea and comes up to the surface to catch the rain water when the star *Svati* is in ascendance. It floats about on the surface of the sea with its shell wide open until it succeeds in catching a drop of the marvellous *Svati*-rain. Then it drives down to its sea-bed and there rests until it has succeeded in fashioning a beautiful pearl out of that rain-drop. Similarly, there are some true and eager aspirants who travel from place to place in search of that watchword from a godly and perfect preceptor (*sad-Guru*) which will open to them the gate of eternal Bliss; and if in their diligent search one is fortunate enough to meet such a *Guru* and get from him the much-longed-for *Logos* which is sure to break down all fetters, he at once retires from society and enters into the deep recess of his own heart and rests there until he succeeds in gaining eternal peace.

169. The man-*Guru* whispers the sacred formula into the ear; the *siddha-Guru* breathes the spirit into the soul.

The Man-Guru mantra to ears doth impart.
The God-Guru seals it on tablets of heart.[1]

170. The *Guru* is a mediator. He brings man and God together.

Necessity of one Guru

171. *Q.* What is the necessity of calling a particular man-*Guru* instead of everyone who teaches us something?

[1] Manusha-Guru mantra day kane,
Siddha-Guru mantra day prane.

A. As when going to a strange country one must abide by the directions of the guide who knows the way, while acting upon the advice of many may lead to confusion, so, in trying to reach God, one must follow implicitly the advice of one single *Guru* who knows the way to God.

172. Whoever can call on the Almighty with sincerity and intense earnestness of soul needs no *Guru*. But such a deep yearning of the soul is very rare, hence the necessity of the *Guru*. The *Guru* is only one, but *upa-Gurus* may be many. He is an *upa-Guru* from whom anything whatsoever is learnt. The great *Avadhuta* had twenty-four such *upa-Gurus*.

173. He who thinks his spiritual guide (*Guru*) to be a mere man cannot derive any benefit from him.

Disciple Must not Criticise the Guru

174. The disciple should never criticise his *Guru*. He must implicitly obey whatever the *Guru* says. There runs a Bengali couplet:

> *Though my Guru may visit tavern, and still,*
> *My Guru is holy Ray Nityananda still.*[2]

"Though my *Guru* may visit the unholy rendezvous of drunkenness and sinners, still to me he is my own pure and faultless *Guru*".

175. Take the pearl and throw the oyster-shell away. Follow the *mantram* (sacred word) given by thy *Guru* and throw out of consideration the human frailties of thy teacher.

176. Listen not if any one criticises and censures thy *Guru*. Leave his presence at once.

177. He who considers his *Guru* to be human, what fruit can he get from his prayers and devotion? We should not consider our *Gurus* to be mere men. Before the disciple sees the Deity, he sees the *Guru* in the first vision of Divine illumination, and it is the (*siddha*-) *Guru* who afterwards shows the Deity, being mysteriously transformed into the form of the Deity. Then the disciple sees the *Guru* and the Deity to be one and the same. Whatever boon the disciple asks, the deified

[2] Yadio amar Guru shuribari yay,
Tathapi amar Guru Nityananda Ray.

Guru even gives him that, yea, the *Guru* even takes him to the highest bliss, Nirvana. Or, the man may choose to remain in a state of duality, maintaining the relation of a worshipper and the worshipped. Whatever he asks, his *Guru* vouchsafes him that.

Guru Facilitates Spiritual Progress

178. In a play of dice called *Ashtakashte,* the pieces must pass through all the squares of the checker-board before they reach the central square of rest and non-return. But so long as a pawn does not reach that square, it is liable to return again and again to its starting-point and commence its weary journey many times over. If. however, two pawns happen to start their journey in unison and move jointly from square, they cannot be forced back by any winner. Similarly, in the world, those who start in their career of devotional practices, first uniting themselves with their *Guru* and *Ishta* (chosen Ideal), need fear no reverses and difficulties and their progress will be smooth, unimpeded, and without any retrogression.[1]

179. As in mid-ocean a bird, which has found its perch upon the mast top of a ship (*mastula*), getting tired of its position, flies away to discover a new place of rest for itself, and alas! without finding any, returns at last to its old roost upon the masthead, weary and exhausted; so, when an ordinary aspirant, being disgusted with the monotony of the task and the discipline imposed upon him by his well-wishing and thoroughly experienced *Guru* (spiritual guide), loses all hopes and, having no confidence in him, launches forth into the broad world over in search of a new guide, he is sure to return at last to his original master after a fruitless search, which has, however, increased the reverence of the repentant aspirant for his own *Guru.*

10. "*Gurus* (spiritual teachers) can be had by hundreds of thousands, but a good *Chela* (disciple) is very rare", is an ancient saying.[2] It means that many are the persons who can give good advice, but they who follow it are few.

[1] About *retrogression theory* vide Swami Abhedananda: *Life Beyond Death and Reincarnation.*

[2] *Guru mile lakh lakh, (kintu) chela na mile ek.*

181. Who can be another's *Guru* ? God alone is the *Guru* and the Master of the universe.

SANNYASINS

182. *Q.* Who is the fit candidate for the holy order of Sannyasins ?

A. He who gives up the world altogether without taking thought for the morrow as to what he shall eat or wherewithal he shall be clothed, is a true Sannyasin. He is like a man who climbs over the top of a high tree and lets himself fall from that eminence without any thought of saving his life and limbs.

183. The Yogis and Sannyasins are like snakes. The snake never digs a hole for itself, but it lives in the hole made by the mouse. When one hole becomes uninhabitable, it enters into another hole. So, the Yogis and Sannyasins make no houses for themselves. They pass their days in other men's houses—today in one house, tomorrow in another.

184. A sage and a god should never be visited empty-handed. However trifling the present may be, one should never fail to place something before these great ones.

CHAPTER III

SPIRITUAL LIFE

"O Mother Divine! I want no honour from men, I want no pleasure of the flesh, only let my soul flow into Thee as the permanent confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna. Mother! I am without Bhakti (devotion), without Yoga, I am poor and friendless. I want praises of none, only let my mind always dwell in the lotus of Thy feet".

Each should follow His own Religion

185. Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Mohammedan should follow Mohammedanism, and so on. For the Hindus the ancient path, the path of the Aryan *Rishis,* is the best.

186. People partition off their lands by means of boundaries, but no one can partition off the all-embracing sky overhead. The indivisible sky surrounds all and includes all. So, a common man in ignorance says: "My religion is the only one, my religion is the best". But when his heart is illumined by true knowledge, he knows that above all these wars of sects and sectarians presides the one indivisible, eternal, all-knowing Bliss.

187. As a mother, in nursing her sick children, gives rice and curry to one, and sago and arrowroot to another and bread and butter to a third, so the Lord has laid out different paths for different men suitable to their natures.

Tolerance for Other Religions

188. A truly religious man should think that other religions are also paths leading to Truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.

189. Remain always strong and steadfast in thy own faith, but eschew all bigotry and intolerance.

190. Be not like the frog in the well. The frog in the

well knows nothing bigger and grander than its own well. So are all bigots; they do not see anything better than their own creeds.

Avoid vain Discussion

191. Dispute not. As you rest firmly on your own faith and opinion, allow others also the equal liberty to stand by their own faiths and opinions. By mere disputation you will never succeed in convincing another of his error. When the grace of God descends on him, each one will understand his own mistakes.

192. To drink pure water from shallow pond, one should gently take water from the surface and not disturb it. If it is disturbed, the sediments will rise up from the bottom and make the whole water muddy. If you desire to be pure, have firm faith and slowly go on with your devotional practices, and waste not your energies in useless scriptural discussions and arguments. The little brain will otherwise be muddled.

193. So long as the bee is outside the petals of the lily, and has not tasted the sweetness of its honey, it hovers round the flower emitting its buzzing sound; but when it is inside the flower, it noiselessly drinks its nectar. So long as a man quarrels and disputes about doctrines and dogmas, he does not taste the nectar of true faith; when he has tasted it, he becomes quiet and full of peace.

194. When water is poured into an empty vessel, a bubbling noise ensues, but when the vessel is full, no such noise is heard. Similarly, the man who has not found God is full of vain disputations about the existence and attributes of the Godhead. But he who has seen Him silently enjoys the Divine Bliss.

Rites and Ceremonies

195. People of this age care for the essence of everything. They will accept the essential of religion and not its non-essentials (that is, the rituals, ceremonials, dogmas and creeds).

196. Although in a grain of paddy the germ is considered the only necessary thing (for germination and growth), while the husk or chaff is considered to be of no importance; still if the husked grain be put into the ground, it will not sprout up and grow into a plant and produce rice. To get a crop one

must need sow the grain with the husk on. But if one wants to get at the kernel itself, he must remove the husk of the grain. So, rites and ceremonies are necessary for the growth and perpetuation of a religion. They are the receptacles that contain the kernel of Truth, and, consequently, every man must perform them before he reaches the central truth.

197. Honour spirit and form, both sentiment within and symbol without.

198. The pearl-oyster that contains the precious pearl is in itself of very little value, but it is essential for the growth of the pearl. The shell itself may prove to be of no use to the man who has got the pearl. So, ceremonies and rites may not be necessary for him who has attained the highest Truth, God.

199. Devotional practices are necessary only so long as tears of ecstasy do not flow at hearing the name of Hari (God). He needs no devotional practices whose heart is moved to tears at the mere mention of the name.

200. The soul reincarnates in a body of which it was thinking just before its last departure from this world. Devotional practices may, therefore, be seen to be very necessary. When by constant practice no worldly ideas arise in the mind, then the God-idea alone fills the soul and does not leave it even when on the brink of eternity.

201. *Q.* What is the difference among the *sattvika,* the *rajasika,* and the *tamasika* ways of worship ?

A. The man who worships from the depths of his heart, without pomp and vanity and without the idea of show, is a *sattvika* worshipper.

The man who decorates his house, has music and dance, and makes costly preparations for a rich feast of fruits and sweetmeats in celebrating the worship of the Deity, is a *rajasika* worshipper.

The man who immolates hundreds of innocent goats and sheep on the altar, has dishes of meat and wine, and becomes absorbed in dancing and singing, is the *tamasika* worshipper.

Sects

202. *Q.* Is it good to create sects (*dal*) ? (Here is a pun on the word *dal* which means both a 'sect' as well as 'the rank growth on the surface of a stagnant pool'.)

A. The *dal* cannot grow in a current of water; it grows only in the stagnant water of small pools. He whose heart longs for the Deity has no time for anything else. He who looks for fame and honour forms sects (*dal* or *sampradaya*).

203. *Dala* (sedge) does not grow in large and pure water-tanks but in all stagnant and miasmatic pools. Similarly, *dala* (schism) does not take place in a party whose adherents are guided by pure, broad, and unselfish motives, but it takes firm root in a party whose advocates are given to selfishness, insincerity and bigetry. (*dala* in Bengali means both sedge and schism).

204. Some years ago, when the Hindus and the Brahmos were preaching their respective religions with true earnestness and great zeal, some one asked Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna his opinion about the two parties, on which he replied: "I see that my Divine Mother is getting Her work done through both the parties".

205. *Q.* There are various sects among the Hindus,—which sect or creed should we adopt?

A. Parvati once asked Mahadeva: "O Lord! what is the root of the eternal, everlasting, all-embracing Bliss?" To her Mahadeva replied: "The root is faith". So, the peculiarities of creeds and sects matter little or nothing. Let everyone perform with faith the devotion and the duties of his own creed.

206. Questioned by a pious devotee as to the difference between Hinduism and Brahmoism, the Bhagavan said: "It is like the difference between the single note of music and the whole music. The Brahmo religion is content with the single note of the Brahman, while Hindu religion consists of several notes producing a sweet, melodious harmony".

207. *Q.* Why do religions degenerate?

A. The rain-water is pure but becomes soiled on earth according to the medium it passes through. If the roof and the pipes be dirty, the water discharged through them must also be dirty.

Easy to talk Religion, Difficult to Act It

208. It is easy to utter *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si* (*sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*) by mouth, but not so easy to sing or play them

ony any instrument. So, it is easy to talk religion, but it is difficult to act religion.

209. Common men talk bagfuls of religion but act not a grain of it, while the wise man speaks little, but his whole life is a religion acted out.

210. What you wish others to do, do yourself.

Man born with Two Tendencies

211. Man is born in this world with two tendencies—the *vidya* tendency, or tendency towards liberation, and the *avidya* tendency, or tendency towards world and bondage. When born, both tendencies are in equilibrium like the scales of a balance. The world soon places its enjoyments and pleasures in one scale, and the spirit and its attractions on the other; and if the intellect chooses the world, the worldly scale becomes heavy and gravitates towards the earth, but if it chooses the Spirit, the spiritual scale gravitates towards God.

212. Seeing the water pass glittering through a network of bamboo sticks the small fry enter into it with great pleasure, and having once entered, they cannot get out and are caught. Similarly, foolish men enter into the world, allured by its false glitter, but as it is easier to enter the net than to get out of it, so it is easier to enter the world than to renounce it, after having once entered it.

Direct Young Hearts Towards God

213. The tender bamboo can be easily bent, but the full-grown bamboo breaks when attempt is made to bend it. It is easy to bend young hearts towards God, but the heart of the old escapes the hold when so drawn.

214. A ripe mango may be offered to God, or to a sage, or may be used for other purposes; but if it be once picked into by a crow, it becomes unfit for all use. It can neither be offered to the Deity. nor given to a Brahmin in charity, nor should it be eaten by any one. Similarly, boys and girls should be dedicated to the service of God when their hearts are pure and when the impurity of worldly desires has not tainted them. Let once worldly desires enter into their minds, or let the

demon of sensual pleasures cast his baneful shadow over them, it is then very difficult to make them tread the path of virtue.

215. The new-born calf looks very lively, blithe, and merry. It jumps and runs all day long, and only stops to suck the sweet milk from its dam. But no sooner is the rope placed round its neck than it begins to pine away gradually, and, far from being merry, wears a dejected and sorry appearance, and gets almost reduced to a skeleton. So long as a boy has no concern with the affairs of the world, he is as merry as the day is long. But when he once feels the weight of responsibilities of a man of family, by binding himself in time to the world by the indissoluble tie of wedlock, then he no longer appears jolly, but wears the look of dejection, care, and anxiety, and is seen to lose the glow of health from his cheeks, while wrinkles gradually make their appearance on the forehead. Blessed is he that remains a boy throughout his life, free as the morning air, fresh as a newly blown flower, and pure as a dew-drop.

216. *Q.* Why do you love young men?

A. Because they possess the whole of their minds. One half the mind of a married man goes to his wife. When child is born, it takes away one fourth, and the remaining one fourth is scattered over relatives, friends, business, name, food, clothes, etc. Therefore, a young mind can easily acquire God.

217. The parrot cannot be taught to sing if it becomes old and the membrane of its throat becomes hardened. It must be taught before the collar line appears and while it is young. So, in old age it is difficult for the mind to be fixed on God. It can be easily done in youth.

The Worldly Find no Opportunity to practise Devotion

218. A person said: "When my boy Harish grows up, I will get him married, and giving him the charge of the family, I shall renounce the world and begin to practise Yoga." At this the Bhagavan said: "You will never find any opportunity to practise Yoga (devotion). You will say afterwards: 'Harish and Girish are very much attached to me. They do not like to leave my company as yet.' Then you will desire, perhaps, 'Let Harish have a son, and let me see that son married.' Thus there will be no end of your desires."

219. The evil spirit is exorcised by throwing magnetized mustard seeds on the patient, but if the spirit has entered into the seed itself, how can such seed remove the evil spirit? If the mind with which thou art to contemplate the Deity be attached to the vicious thoughts of the world, how canst thou expect to do successfully thy religious devotions with such a corrupt instrument?

The Worldly Insincere in Their Professions of Piety

220. Worldly men repeat the name of Hari (God) and perform various pious and charitable deeds with the hope of worldly rewards, but when misfortune, sorrow, poverty, death approach them, they forget them all. They are like the parrot that repeats by rote the Divine names, Radha Krishna, Radha Krishna the livelong day, but cries kaw, kaw, when caught by a cat, forgetting the Divine name.

221. A spring cushion is squeezed down when one sits upon it, but it soon resumes its original shape when the pressure is removed. So, it is with worldly souls. They are full of religious sentiments and in pious moods so long as they hear religious talks; but no sooner do they enter into the daily routine of the world than they forget all those high and noble thoughts and become as impure as before.

222. So long as the iron is in the furnace it is red-hot, but it becomes black soon after it is taken out. So is also the worldly man. So long as he is in a church, or in the society of pious people, he is full of religious emotions, but no sooner does he come out of those associations than he loses them all.

Religious Advice Unheeded by the Worldly

223. As water enters into one side under a bridge and soon passes out of the other, so religious advice enters into the heart of a worldly man by one ear and goes out by the other without making impression upon his mind.

224. As a nail cannot be driven into a stone but can easily be driven into the earth, so the advice of a sage does not affect the soul of a worldly man; it enters easily into the heart of a believer.

225. By talking with a worldly man one can feel that his heart is filled with worldly thoughts and desires even as the crop of a pigeon is filled with grains.

226. The characteristic of a thoroughly worldly man is that he does not only not listen to hymns, religious discourses, praises of the Almighty, etc., but also prevents others from hearing them, and abuses religious men and societies, and scoffs at prayers.

227. As a little boy or girl can have no idea of conjugal affection, even so a worldly man cannot at all comprehend the ecstasy of Divine Communion.

228. The alligator has such a thick and scaly skin that no weapon can pierce it. So, how much soever you may preach religion to a worldly man, it will have no effect upon his heart.

Heart of a Sinner

229. The heart of a sinner is like a curled hair. You may pull it ever so long but will not succeed in making it straight. So, also, the heart of the wicked cannot be easily changed.

230. As water does not enter into a stone, so religious advice produces no impression on the imprisoned soul of *baddha jiva.*

231. As sieves separate the finer and coarser part of a pulverized or ground substance, keeping the coarser and rejecting the finer, even so the wicked man takes the evil and rejects the good.

232. A wicked man's mind is like the curly tail of a dog.

233. When the mind dwells in evil propensities it is like a high caste Brahmin living in the quarters of the outcastes, or like a gentleman dwelling in the back slums of a town.

234. Let not thy mind be as the store-house of a washerman. He fills his room with the unclean clothes of others, but when those clothes are clean and ready for use, they go to their respective owners and he has nothing to call his own.

Mind Attached to Lust and Wealth

235. The mind attached to lust and wealth is like the unripe betel-nut attached to its shell; so long as the betel-nut is not ripe, it remains fixed to its shell by its juice, but when the juicy substance dries by time, the nut becomes detached

from its shell and is felt rolling inside the shell, if shaken. So, when the juice of attachment to gold and lust is dried up, the man becomes free.

236. As a soft clay easily takes an impression, but not the stone, so also the Divine wisdom impresses itself on the heart of a sincere devotee, but not on that of the bound soul.

237. A wet match does not ignite; however hard you may rub it, it only smokes. But a dry match catches fire at once, even with the slightest rubbing. The heart of the devotee is like the dry match; the slightest mention of the name of the Lord kindles the fire of love in his heart; but the mind of the worldly man soaked in lust and wealth is like the moist match. Though God may be preached a number of times. the fire of love can never be kindled in him.

Worldly Men Unchanged by Divine Grace

238. When the malaya breeze blows, all trees having stamina in them become converted into sandal-trees; but those which have no stamina remain unchanged as before, like bamboo, plantain, palmtree, etc. So, when Divine grace descends, men having the germs of piety and goodness in them are changed at once into holy beings and are filled with the Divinity, but worthless and worldly men remain as before.

239. Flies sit at times on the sweetmeats kept exposed for sale in the shop of a confectioner; but no sooner does a sweeper pass by with a basket full of filth than the flies leave the sweetmeats and sit upon the filth-basket. But the honey-bee never sits on filthy objects, and always drinks honey from the flowers. The worldly men are like flies. At times they get a momentary taste of the Divine sweetness, but their natural tendency for filth soon brings them back to the dunghill of the world. The good man, on the other hand, is always absorbed in the beatific contemplation of Divine Beauty.

N.B.: The worldly man is like a worm that always lives and dies in filth, and has no idea of higher things; the good man of the world is like the fly that sits now on the filth and now on the sweet; while the free soul of a Yogin is like the bee that always drinks the honey of God's holy presence, and nothing else.

240. The man immersed in worldliness cannot attain the Divine knowledge. He cannot see God. Does the muddy water ever reflect the sun or any surrounding object?

241. As the troubled surface of rolling waters does not reflect the full moon properly, but in broken images; so, the mind that is disturbed by worldly desires and passions does not fully reflect the light of God.

242. Soft clay admits of forms, but the burnt clay does not. So, those whose hearts are consumed with the fire of worldly desires cannot be impressed with higher ideas.

Teachings of the Worldly

243. The cries of all jackals are alike. The teachings of all the wise men of the world are essentially one and the same.

244. The vulture soars high up in the air, but all the time he is looking down into the charnelpits in search of putrid carcases. So, the book-read Pandits speak glibly and volubly about Divine knowledge, but it is all mere talk, for all the while their mind is thinking about how to get money, respect, power, etc., the vain guerdon of their learning.

245. A worldly man may be endowed with intellect as great as that of Janaka, may take as much pains and trouble as a Yogin, and make as great sacrifices as an ascetic; but all these he makes and does, not for God, but for worldliness, honour, and wealth.

246. Of all the birds of the air the crow is considered to be the wisest, and he thinks himself so too. He never falls into a snare. He flies off at the slightest approach of danger, and steals food with the greatest dexterity. But all this wisdom can supply him with no better living than filth and foul matter. This is the result of his having the wisdom of the pettifogger.

Mind of Worldly Man

247. As the fly now sits on the unclean sore of the human body and now on the offerings dedicated to the gods, so the mind of the worldly man is at one time engaged in religious topics and at the next moment loses itself in the pleasures of wealth and lust.

248. When a certain quantity of pure milk is mixed with double the quantity of water, it takes a long time and labour to thicken it to the consistency of *kshira* (condensed milk). The mind of a worldly man is largely diluted with the water of evil and impure thoughts and it requires a long time and labour before anything can be done to purify and give proper consistency to it.

249. If a man suffering from very high fever and dying of thirst be placed near pitchers filled with ice-cold water and a set of open-mouthed bottles filled with savoury sauces, is it possible for such a thirsty and restless patient to resist the temptation of drinking the water or tasting the sauces? Similarly, the worldly man who is suffering from the high fever of lust and is thirsty for sensual pleasures cannot resist temptations when he is placed between the attractions of woman's charm on the one side and those of wealth on the other. He is sure to deviate from the path of righteousness.

The Worldly-minded Prefer Sense Pleasures

250. The worldly-minded man prefers the pleasures of the senses than the bliss of Divine Communion. A certain worldly disciple of the Bhagavan was once at his request put into the state of *samadhi* by the Bhagavan. Doctors could not bring him out of that state and its intoxication lasted fifteen days. On regaining consciousness by the touch of the Bhagavan, the disciple said: "Lord, what shall I do with this state now, my sons are not capable of looking after my properties?"

251. None ventures to keep milk in an earthen pot in which curd has once formed, lest the milk itself should get curdled. Nor can the vessel be safely used for other working purposes lest it should crack upon the fire. It is therefore almost useless. A good and experienced (*siddha*) *Guru* (preceptor) does not entrust to a worldly man valuable and exalting precepts; for, he is sure to misinterpret and misuse them to suit his own mean designs. Nor will he ask him to do any useful work that may cost a little labour, lest he should think that the preceptor was taking undue advantage of him.

252. As it is very difficult to gather the mustard seeds that escape out of a torn package and are scattered in all directions, so, when the human mind runs in diverse directions and is occupied with many things in the world, it is not a very easy task to collect and concentrate it.

253. The heavier scale of a balance goes down while the lighter one rises up. Similarly, he who is weighed down with too many cares and anxieties of the world goes down into it, while he who has fewer cares rises up towards the kingdom of Heaven.

254. *Q.* What is the world like?

A. It is like an *amrha* fruit, all skin and stone with but very little pulp, the eating of which produces colic.

Salvation for Worldly-minded in Renunciation

255. *Q.* What state of mind being attained to, can the worldly-minded get salvation?

A. If by the grace of God the quick spirit of renunciation come to one, then one can get rid of the attachment to lust and wealth and then only is one free from all worldly bondages.

256. When paper is moistened with oil it cannot be written upon. So, the soul spoiled by the oil of sense-enjoyments is unfit for spiritual devotion. But just as oiled paper, when overlaid with chalk, can be written upon; so, when the soul is chalked over with renunciation, it again becomes fit for spiritual progress.

257. The key to open that room wherein God is, works in a curiously contrary way. To reach God you have to renounce the world.

258. This world is like a stage where men perform many parts under various disguises. They do not like to take off the mask unless they have played for some time. Let them play for a while, and then they will leave off the mask of their own accord.

259. Whatever gives enjoyment in this world contains a bit of Divine happiness[1] in it. The difference between the two is as between treacle and refined candy.

[1] Brahmananda.

How to Harmonize World and God

260. *Q.* The world and God. how is it possible to harmonize both?

A. Look to the carpenter's wife, how diversely busy she is! With one hand she is stirring the *cheerah* (flattened rice) in the mortar of a *dhenki* (a wooden husking and rice-flattening machine), with the other she is holding the child to her breast and suckling it, and at the same time bargaining with a purchaser about the *cheerah*. Thus, though manifold are her occupations, her mind is fixed on the one idea that the pestle of the *dhenki* shall not fall on her hand and bruise it. Be in the world, but always remember Him and never go astray from His path.

261. As the street minstrel with one hand plays upon the guitar and with the other strikes a drum, all the while chanting a song; so, O thou world-bound soul, perform all thy worldly duties with thy hands, but never forget to repeat and glorify the name of the Lord with all thy heart.

262. As persons living in a house infested by venomous snakes are always alert and cautious. so should men living in the world be always on their guard against the allurements of lust and greed.

How to Conquer Passions

263. On being asked when enemies, lust, anger, etc., can be vanquished, the Bhagavan replied: So long as these passions are directed towards the world and its objects, they are enemies; but when they are directed towards the Deity, they become the best friends of man, for they take him to the God-head. Lust for worldly things must be changed to lust for God; the anger which you feel towards your fellow-creatures must be directed towards God for not manifesting Himself to you, and so on with all your passions. The passions should not be eradicated but educated.

Saving Power of Divine Wisdom

264. The snake is very venomous; it bites when any one approaches to catch it. But the person who has learnt the

art of snake-charming not only can catch a snake, but carries about several of them hanging round his neck and arms like so many ornaments. Similarly, he who has acquired spiritual knowledge can never be polluted by lust and greed.

265. Unshod and with bare feet who will venture to walk upon thorns and sharp stones? Shod with Divine wisdom (*tattvajnanam*), what thorn or sharp stone can harm you?

266. If you first smear the palms of your hands with oil and break open the jack-fruit, the sticky milky exudation of the fruit will not stick to the hands and do not trouble you. So, if you first fortify yourself with the true knowledge of the universal Self and then live in the midst of gold and lust they will affect you in no way.

267. Fastening in thy garment the knowledge of Advaita (oneness or non-daulity) do whatever thou wishest.

Good and evil cannot bind him who has realized the oneness of the nature and Self with the Brahman.

First Seek God, Then the World

268. To someone the Bhagavan said: Well, now you have come to seek God when you have spent the greater part of your life in the world. Had you entered the world after realizing God, what peace and joy you would have found!

269. First gain God and then gain wealth, but do not do the contrary. If after acquiring spirituality you lead a worldly life, then you will never lose your peace of mind.

270. As a boy holding on to a post or a pillar gyrates round it with headlong speed without fear of falling, so, fixing thy hold firmly on God, perform thy worldly duties, and thou shalt be free from all dangers.

271. Do not let worldly thoughts and anxieties disturb your mind. Do everything that is necessary in its proper time and let your mind be always fixed on God.

272. As an unchaste woman, busily engaged in household affairs, is all the while thinking of her secret lover, even so, O thou man of the world, do thy round of worldly duties, but fix thy heart always on the Lord.

The Devotee Who Cherishes Worldly Desires

273. A husbandman was watering a sugarcane field the whole of a day. After finishing his task he saw that not a drop of water had entered the field; all the water had gone underground through several big rat-holes. Such is the state of that devotee who, cherishing secretly in his heart worldly desires (of fame. pleasures, and comforts) and ambitions, worships God. Though daily praying, he makes no progress because his entire devotion runs to waste through the rat-holes of these desires, and at the end of his life-long devotion he is the same man as before, and has not advanced a bit.

274. He who is a thief of his own thoughts does not accomplish anything. How canst thou see God when thy whole heart and soul do not long for Him?

275. What you think, you should say. Let there be a harmony with your thoughts and words; otherwise, if you merely tell that God is your all-in-all while your mind has made the world its all-in-all, you cannot derive any benefit thereby.

276. A boat may stay in the water, but the water should not stay in the boat. A spiritual aspirant may live in the world, but the world should not live in him.

277. If there is a small hole in the bottom of a jar of water the whole water flows out of it by that small aperture. Similarly, if there be the slightest tinge of worldliness in the neophyte, all his exertions come to naught.

278. So long as the fire is beneath, the milk boils and bubbles. Remove the fire and it is quiet again. Similarly, the heart of the neophyte boils with enthusiasm so long as he goes on with his spiritual exercises, but afterwards it cools down.

Neophyte Must not Mix with the Worldly

279. Milk and water when brought into contact are sure to mix, so that the milk can never be kept separated again. Similarly, if the neophyte, thirsting after self-improvement, mixes indiscriminately with all sorts of worldly people, not only does he lose his ideal, but also his former faith, love and enthusiasm die away imperceptibly.

280. When butter is produced by churning the whey, it should not be kept in the same vessel containing the remain-

ing whey, for then it will lose some of its sweetness and cohesion. It should be kept in pure water and in a different vessel. So, after attaining some partial perfection in this world, if a man still continues to mix with the worldly and remains in the midst of the world, it is likely that he will be tainted; but he will remain pure if he lives out of it.

281. You cannot live in a sooty room without blackening your body to some extent, however small it may be, with all your caution. So, if a man or woman lives in the company of one of the opposite sex of the same age with the greatest circumspection and control over his or her passion, still some carnality, however small, is sure to arise in his or her mind.

Avoid Wicked Association

282. It is true that God is even in the tiger, but we must not go and face the animal. So, it is true that God dwells even in the most wicked, but it is not right that we should associate with the wicked.

283. Visit not miracle-workers. They are wanderers from the path of truth. Their minds have become entangled in the meshes of psychic powers, which lie in the way of pilgrims towards the Brahman as temptations. Beware of these powers and desire them not.

284. All water is brooded over by Narayana (Supreme Spirit), but every kind of water is not fit to drink. Similarly, though it is true that the Almighty dwells in every place, yet every place is not fit to be visited by man. As one kind of water may be used for washing our feet, another may serve the purposes of ablution, and others may be drunk, while others again may not be touched at all; so, there are different kinds of places. We may approach some, we may enter into the inside of others, while others we must avoid even at a distance.

285. A young plant should be always protected by a fence from the mischief of goats and cows and little urchins. But when once it becomes a big tree, a flock of goats or a herd of cows may find shelter under its spreading boughs, and fill their stomachs with its leaves. So, when you have but little faith within you, you should protect it from the evil influences of bad company and worldliness. But when once you grow

strong in faith, no worldliness or evil inclination will dare approach your holy presence; and many who are wicked will become godly through your holy contact.

Neophite Should Seek Solitude and Stillness

286. Once some Brahmo boys told me that they followed Janaka's example; they lived in this world quite unattached to it. I said to them that it was easy to say that, but it was a different matter to be Janaka. It was so hard to move among worldly affairs without being contaminated. What terrible austerities did not Janaka practise at the outset! But I do not advise you to go through similar hardships, but what I do want you to do is to practise some devotion and to live alone for a time in some quiet place. Enter into the world after gaining *jnana* and *bhakti* for yourselves. The best curd is formed when milk is left alone to stand quite still. The shaking or changing of pots spoils it. Janaka was unattached, hence one of the epithets applied to him was videha literally, bodyless. He led the life of a *Jivanmukta* (literally, free though alive in the body); the annihilation of the body idea is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. Truly Janaka was a great hero. He handled with ease the two swords—the one of *jnana*, and the other of *karma*.

287. If you have a mind to live unattached from the world, you should first practise devotion in solitude for some time,—say a year, or six months, or a month, or at least twelve days. During the period of retirement you should meditate constantly upon God and pray to Him for Divine Love. You should revolve in your mind the thought that there is nothing in the world that you may call your own; those whom you think your own will pass away in no time. God is really your own. He is your all-in-all. How to obtain Him should be your only concern.

288. Keep thyself aloof at the time of thy devotion from those who scoff at them and from those who ridicule piety and the pious.

289. Keep thine own sentiments and faith to thyself. Do not talk about them abroad. Otherwise thou wilt be a great loser.

290. If you wash well the body of an elephant and let him at large, he is sure to get himself dirtied in no time; but if after washing him, you tie him down to his own room, he will remain clean. So, if by the good influences of holy men you once become pure in spirit and then allow yourself to mix freely with worldly men, you are sure to lose that purity soon; but if you keep your mind fixed on God, you will never more get soiled in spirit.

The Pure in Heart See God

291. The soiled mirror never reflects the rays of the sun, and the impure and unclean in heart who are subject to *maya* never perceive the glory of the Lord. But the pure in heart see the Lord as the clear mirror reflects the sun. Be holy, then.

292. As a man standing on the brink of a deep well is always afraid and watchful lest he fall into it, so should a man living in the world be always on his guard against temptations. He who has once fallen into the well of temptation can hardly come out of it pure and stainless.

293. That man, who living in the midst of the temptations of the world attains perfection, is the true hero.

294. The new-born calf feels unsteady and tumbles down scores of times before it learns to stand steady. So, in the path of devotion the footslips are many and frequent before success is finally achieved.

The Truly Religious

295. The truly religious man is he who does not commit any sin even when he is alone, because God sees him, though no man may see Him. He who can resist the temptation of lust and gold in a lonely place unobserved by any man, through the fear that God sees him, and who through such fear does not even think an evil thought, is truly a religious man. But he who practises religion for the sake of show and through the fear of public opinion has no religion in him.

296. Sin, like quicksilver, can never be concealed.

297. He is truly a pious man who is dead even in this life, *i.e.*, whose passions and desires have been destroyed as in a dead body.

298. As *helencha* (*hingcha* ripens) should not be counted among pot-herbs or sugar-candy among common sweets, because even a sick man can use them without injuring his health; or as the Pranava (Onkara) is not to be counted as a word, but as Divinity itself; so, the desires of holiness, devotion, and love are not to be reckoned as desires at all.

299. Sugar and sand may be mixed together, but the ant rejects the sand and goes off with the sugar-grain; so pious men shift the good from the bad.

300. It is the nature of the winnowing basket to reject the bad and keep the good; even such is the case with pious men.

301. *Q.* When does the attraction of sensual and worldly pleasures die away?

A. In God, who is indivisible ever-existing Bliss, there is a consolidation of all happiness and of all pleasures. They who enjoy Him, can find no attraction in the pleasures of the world.

302. When the tail of the tadpole drops off, it can live both in water and on land. When the trail of ignorance drops off, man becomes free. He can then live both in God and in the world equally well.

Ascetics

303. Those who live in the world and try to find salvation are like soldiers that fight protected by the breastwork of a fort, while the ascetics who renounce the world in search of God are like soldiers fighting in the open field. To fight from within the fort is more convenient and safer than to fight in the open field.

304. Of the grains of paddy which are fried in a frying-pan, those few which leap out of the pan and burst outside are the best fried, being without the least mark of any tinge; every one of even the properly-fried grains in the pan itself is sure to have at least a very small charred mark of a burn. So, of all good devotees, the few who altogether give up the world and go out of it are perfect without any spot, while even the best devotees who are in the world must have at least some small spot of imperfection in their character.

305. *Q.* What is the nature of the ascetic who has renounced the world, not through conviction, but through feelings of temporary disgust?

A. A man who has become an ascetic owing to some misunderstanding with his father, mother, or his wife, is called an ascetic by disgust. His asceticism is ephemeral and it is lost as soon as he gets some fat appointment in a foreign land. That man is sure to return to the bosom of his family with accumulation of wealth and riches.

306. If a white cloth is stained with a small speck, the blackness appears very ugly indeed by contrast; so, the smallest fault of a holy man becomes painfully prominent by his surrounding purity.

The True and the False Sadhu

307. As by rubbing gold and brass on a touchstone one tests the quality of the metal, so the sincere *Sadhu* (holy one) and a hyprocrite are found out when they are rubbed on the touchstone of persecution and adversity.

308. The *Sadhu* who distributes medicines and uses intoxicants is not a proper *Sadhu*; avoid the company of such.

309. Out of the myriads of paper kites that are made to fly in the air, only one or two rend the string and get free. So, out of hundreds of *Sadhakas* (seekers after freedom) only one or two get free from this worldly bondage.

Different Classes of Men

310. As when fish are caught in a net, some do not struggle at all but remain calm in the net, some again struggle hard to come out of the net, while a few are very happy to effect their escape by rending the net; so there are three sorts of men: fettered (*baddha*), struggling (*mumukshu*), and released (*mukta*).

311. When an unbaked pot is broken, the potter can use its clay to make a new pot; but when a baked pot is broken, he does not use its pieces any longer. So, when a person dies in a state of ignorance, he must be born again; but when he becomes well backed in the fire of true knowledge, *i.e.*, when he becomes perfect, he is not born again after death.

312. The boiled paddy grain does not grow again. Only the unboiled paddy grain brings forth the shoot. Similarly, when a man dies becoming perfect (*siddha*), he has not to be born again; but an imperfect man (*asiddha*) has to be born again and again until he becomes a *Siddha*.

313. There are two classes of people who attain perfection in this world: those who get the Truth and become silent, enjoying it all to themselves without any thought of others; people of the other class get the Truth and cannot find pleasure in keeping it to themselves, but cry out in a trumpet voice to all: "Come ye and enjoy the Truth with us".

314. There are three dolls, the first made of salt, the second made of cloth, and the third made of stone. If these dolls be immersed in water, the first will get dissolved and lose its from, the second will absorb a large quantity of water and retain its from, while the third will be impervious to the water. The first doll represents the man who merges his self in the universal and all-pervading Self and becomes one with It; that is a *mukta-Purusha*. The second represents a true lover or Bhakta, who is full of Divine bliss and knowledge; and the third represents a wordly man who will not admit even the least trace of true knowledge within.

315. The coverings of cakes are made of rice flour, but they are stuffed inside with different ingredients. The goodness or badness of the cake depends upon the quality of its stuffing. So, all human bodies are made of one and the same material; but men are different in quality according to the purity of their hearts.

Spiritual Gain Depends on Heart

316. The spiritual gain of a person depends upon his sentiments and ideas, proceeds from his heart and not from his visible actions. Two friends while strolling about, happened to pass by a place where the *Bhagavatam* (the word of God) was being preached. One of them said: "Brother, let us go there for a while and hear the good words spoken". The other replied: "No, friend, what is the use of hearing the *Bhagavatam* ? Let us spend the time in yonder public-house in amusement and pleasure". The first one did not consent to

this. He went to the place where the *Bhagavatam* was being read and began to hear it. The other went to the public-house, but did not find the pleasure that he had anticipated there and was thinking all the while: "Alas me! why have I come here? How happy is my friend hearing all the while the sacred life and deeds of Hari (Lord)". Thus he meditated on Hari even though in a public-house. The other man who was hearing the *Bhagavatam,* also did not find pleasure in it. Sitting there, he began to blame himself, saying: "Alas! why did I not accompany my friend to the public-house? What a great pleasure he must be enjoying at this time there!" The result was that he who was sitting where the *Bhagavatam* was preached, meditated on the pleasure of the public-house and acquired the fruit of the sin of going to the public-house because of his bad thoughts; while the man who had gone to the public-house acquired the merits of hearing the *Bhagavatam* because of his good heart.

Power of Mind and Thought

317. It is the mind that makes one wise or ignorant, bound or emancipated. One is holy because of his mind, one is wicked because of his mind, one is a sinner because of his mind, and it is the mind that makes one virtuous. So, he whose mind is always fixed on God requires no other practices, devotion, or spiritual exercises.

318. The faith-healers of India order their patients to repeat with full conviction the words: "There is no illness in me, there is no illness at all". The patient repeats it, and thus mentally denying the illness goes off. So, if you think yourself mortally weak, sinful and without goodness, you will really find yourself to be so in time. Know and believe that you are of immense power and the power will come to you at last.

319. Many with a show of humility say: "I am like a low worm grovelling in the dust"; thus always thinking themselves worms, in time they become weak in spirit like worms. Let not despondency ever enter into thy heart; despair is the great enemy of progress in one's path. As a man thinketh, so he becometh.

320. A man sitting under the shade of the *Kalpa-vriksha*

(wishing tree) wished to be a king and instantly he was a king. The next moment he wished to have a charming damsel and the damsel was instantly by his side. The man then thought to himself: "If a tiger should come and devour me; and, alas! in an instant he was in the jaws of the tiger. God is like the wishing-tree: whosoever in His presence thinks that he is destitute and poor, remains as such; but he who believes that the Lord fulfils all his wants, receives everything from Him.

321. He who thinks that he is a *Jiva* (imperfect and worldly soul) is verily a *Jiva*; he who considers himself to be God, verily becomes God. As one thinks, so he becomes.

322. When an elephant is let loose, it goes about uprooting trees and shrubs, but as soon as the driver pricks him on the head with the goad, he becomes quiet; so the mind, when unrestrained, wantons in the luxuriance of idle thoughts, but becomes at once calm when struck with the goad of right discrimination (*viveka*).

Discrimination and Dispassion

323. A shy horse does not go straight so long as his eyes are not covered by blinders. Similarly, the mind of a worldly man should be prevented from looking about by the blinders of discrimination (*viveka*) and dispassion (*vairagya*), for then it will not stumble or go astray in evil paths.

324. If you put any purifying substance, like a piece of alum, into a vessel of muddy water, the water is purified, and the impurities settle down at the bottom. *Viveka* (discrimination of the Real, God, from the unreal, phenomenal appearances) and *vairagya* (non-attachment to the world) are the two purifiers of the human heart. With their help the mind of the worldly man ceases to be worldly and becomes pure.

325. The caterpillar gets itself imprisoned in its cell of self-woven cocoon. So, the worldly soul gets itself entangled in the meshes of its desires. But when the caterpillar develops into a bright and beautiful butterfly, it rends the cocoon and enjoys freedom. So, the worldly soul can be free from the meshes of *maya* by developing the wings of *viveka* (discrimination) and *vairagya* (renunciation).

326. We must dive deep into the ocean of the eternal-intelligent-bliss. Fear not the deep-sea monsters of avarice and

anger. Coat thyself with the turmeric of discrimination and dispassion (*viveka* and *vairagya*) and those alligators will not approach thee, as the scent of this turmeric is too much for them.

327. Right discrimination is of two kinds, analytical and synthetical. The first leads one from the phenomena to the Absolute Brahman, while by the second one knows how the Absolute Brahman appears in the universe.

328. *Q.* How many kinds of *vairagya* (renunciation) are there ?

A. Generally there are two, the intense and the moderate. The intense *vairagya* is like digging a large tank in one night and filling it with water. The moderate renunciation is ever procrastinating. There is no knowing when it will become complete.

329. *Q.* How should one practise renunciation (*vairagya*)?

A. A wife once spoke to her husband, saying: "My dear, I am very anxious about my brother. For the last few days he has been thinking of renouncing the world and of becoming a Sannyasin, and has begun preparations for it. He has been trying gradually to curb his desires and reduce his wants". The husband replied: "You need not be anxious about your brother. He will never become a Sannyasin. No one has ever renounced the world by making long preparations". The wife asked: "How then does one become a Sannyasin ?" The husband answered: "Do you wish to see how one renounces the world ? Let me show you". Saying this, instantly he tore his flowing dress into pieces, tied one piece round his loins, told his wife that she and all women were henceforth his mother, and left the house never to return.

Reading of the Scriptures

330. It is useless to pore over holy Scriptures and sacred *Shastras* without a discriminating and dispassionate mind. No spiritual progress can be made without discrimination (*viveka*) and renunciation (*vairagya*).

331. *Grantha* does not always mean a holy Scripture, but it rather means a *grantha* or a knot.[1] If a man does not read

[1] Really the Scriptures (*shastras*) are the revealer (*jnapakam*) of God and not God itself.

it with an intense desire to know the Truth by renouncing all vanity, and even his comforts, if that be necessary, mere reading will breed in him pedantry, presumptuousness, egotism, etc., which resemble so many knots in his mind.

332. Those who have read a little, become puffed up with pride. I had a conversation on God? He said: "Oh, I know all these things". I said to him: "Does one who went to Delhi go about telling that he did so and make a display ? Does a Babu say he is a Babu ?"

Those Who Cannot Gain Self-knowledge

333. The following are among those who cannot gain self-knowledge: those who boast of learning, those who are proud of knowledge, and those who are vain of riches. If one says to these: "In such and such a place there is a good Sannyasin, will you come to see him ?" they will invariably make some excuses and say that they cannot go ; but in their minds they think they are men of high positions, why should they go to another ?

334. A well-known Brahmo preacher said that the Paramahamsa was a mad man and that his brain had got unsettled by constantly thinking upon one subject. The Paramahamsa, addressing the preacher, said: "You say that even in Europe learned men become mad by constantly thinking over one subject. But what is that subject, matter or spirit ? What wonder that a man should become mad by constantly thinking over matter! But how can one lose one's intelligence and become mad by thinking over that Intelligence from which the whole universe is made intelligent ? Do your scriptures teach you so ?"

Relative and Absolute Knowledge

335. The eternal should be preached through the non-eternal, the real through the help of the unreal, and the noumena through the help of the phenomena.

336. When a sharp thorn finds its way into the sole of one's foot, one takes the help of another thorn to get the former

out, and then casts both of them away. So relative knowledge (*vidya*) alone can remove the relative ignorance (*avidya*) which blinds the eye of Self. As both such knowledge and ignorance are comprised truly under nescience, the man who attains the highest *jnana* or the knowledge of the Absolute does away with both *vidya* and *avidya* in the end, being himself free from all duality.

Illusive Power of Maya

337. If you can detect and find out the universal illusion of *maya,* it will fly away from you just as a thief runs away when found out.

338. If the person possessed of the evil spirit has the consciousness that he is so possessed, the evil spirit at once leaves him. Similarly, the *Jiva* (individual soul) possessed by the spirit of *maya* (self-delusion) on realizing that he is self-deluded becomes at once free from *maya.*

339. There are people who, although they have nothing to attract them in this world, create some attachments for themselves and so try to bind themselves to this earth. They do not want and do not like to be free. A man who has no family to care for, no relatives to look after, generally takes a cat or a monkey or a dog or a bird for a pet object and companion, and thus slakes his thirst for milk by drinking mere whey. Such is the illusive power of *maya* over humanity.

340. A patient in high fever and excess of thirst imagines that he can drink away quite a sea of water; but when that fit of fever goes and he regains his normal temperature, he can barely quaff off a single cupful of water, and his thirst is at once appeased with even a very small quantity of it. So a man, being under the feverish excitement of *maya* and forgetful of his own littleness, imagines that he can embrace the whole of the Divinity within his own bosom, but when the illusion passes away, a single ray of divine light is seen to be sufficient to flood him with eternal Divine Bliss.

341. Paramahamsadeva once told a professional debater: "If you want to understand the Truth by arguing, then go to the Brahmo preacher K.; but if you want to understand it in a single word, then come to me".

Unreality of the World

342. An earnest seeker asked the Master: "Kindly instruct me in one word so that I may be illumined". To which the Master replied: "*Brahman* is Truth and the world is unreal" (*Brahma satya jaganmithya*).

343. A holy man used to look at a chandelier prism day and night and smile. The reason of his so doing was that he used to see various colours through the prism, red, yellow, etc., and as all these colours were false, so he knew the world to be unreal.

344. *Q.* Is this world unreal ?

A. It is unreal so long as you do not know God. For, you do not see Him (in everything) but fasten yourself to the world with the tie of "*me* and *mine*". Being thus deluded by ignorance, you become attached to sense objects and go deeper and deeper into the abyss of *maya*. *Maya* makes men so utterly blind that they cannot get out of the *samsara* (worldliness, even when the way lies straight open. You yourself know how unreal the *samsara* is. Think a little of the very house that we are in. How many men have been born and have died in it! Things of the world appear before us at one moment and vanish away at the next. Those whom you know to be your 'own' will cease to exist for you the moment you close your eyes in death. How strong is the hold of attachment upon a worldly man! There is none in the family who requires his attention, yet for the sake of a grandson he cannot go to Benaras (to practise devotion). "What will become of my Haru?" is the one thought that keeps him bound to the world. In a *ghuni* (a trap for catching fish) the way out is always open, yet the fish do not get out of it. The caterpillar shuts itself up in its own saliva and perishes. Such *samsara* is undoubtedly unreal and evanescent.

The Body Transient

345. *Q.* How may we conquer the love of life?

A. The human frame is made up of decaying things, of flesh, blood, bone, etc. It is a collection of flesh, bone, marrow, blood and other filthy substances subject to putrefaction. By thus analyzing the body, our love thereof vanishes.

346. No longer does one care for the cage when the bird has flown away from it. So, when the bird of life flies away no one cares any longer for the carcass.

347. Disease is the tax which the soul pays for the use of the body, as the tenant pays house-tax for the house he occupies.

348. The body is transient and unimportant. Why then is it so much looked after? No one cares for an empty box. But people carefully preserve the box that contains money and other valuable property. The virtuous cannot but take care of the body, the temple of the soul in which God has manifested Himself, or which has been blessed by God's advent.

349. *Q.* How does the Lord dwell in the body?

A. He dwells in the body like the plug of a syringe—that is, in the body, and yet apart from it.

350. The human body is like a boiling pot, and the mind and the senses are like water, rice, potato, etc. in it. But the pot with its ingredients on the fire will be so hot as to burn your finger when you touch it. But the heat does not belong to the pot, nor to anything contained in it, but is in the fire. So, it is the fire of *Brahman* in man that causes the mind and the senses to perform their functions, and when that fire ceases to act, the senses as well as the organs stop their functions.

Food and Drink

351. He cannot bestow any thought on such trifling questions as of food and drink whose mind yearns after God.

352. He who eats the food of the gods, namely, simple non-stimulating vegetable food, but does not desire to attain God, for him that simple food is as bad as beef. But he who eats beef and desires God, for him beef is as good as the food of the gods.

353. That is the truly prescribed diet (helpful to spirituality) which does not make the mind unsteady.

Money and Riches

354. Money can procure only bread and butter. Do not consider it therefore to be thy flesh and blood or thy sole end and aim.

355. There is nothing to be proud of in money. If you say that you are rich, there are richer and richer men than you, in comparison with whom you are a mere beggar. After dusk, when the glow-worms make their appearance, they think: "We are giving light to the world." But when the stars rise, their pride is gone. Then the stars begin to think: "We are shedding light on the universe." After some time the moon ascends the sky, and the stars are humiliated and look melancholy. So again, the moon begins to be proud and think that by her light the world is lighted, and smiles and bathes in beauty and cheerfulness. But lo! the dawn proclaims the advent of the rising sun on the eastern horizon. Where is the moon now? If they who think themselves rich ponder over these natural facts, they will never, never boast of their riches again.

356. He is the true man whose servant is money. Those who do not know how to use money do not deserve to be called men.

357. As water passes under a bridge but never stagnates, so money passes through the hands of 'The Free' who never hoard it.

Praise and Censure

358. One who spends his time in discussing the good and bad qualities of others wastes his time. For, it is time spent neither in thinking about his own self nor of the Supreme Self, but of other selves.

359. Be indifferent to the praise and censure of mankind. considering them to be like the cawing of crows.

360. Men are quick to praise and quick to blame, so do not take to heart what others say of thee.

Forbearance and Forgiveness

361. In the Bengali alphabet no three letters are alike in sound except the three sibilants (*sa sha,* and *sa*—three *sa-s*), all meaning 'forbear', 'forbear', 'forbear'. This shows that even from our childhood we are made to learn forbearance in our very alphabets. The quality of forbearance is of the highest importance to every man.

362. The true character of the holy ones is all forgiveness.

363. The anger of the good is like a line which is formed on the surface of the water and which soon disappears.

364. As thieves cannot enter a house the inmates of which are wide awake, so, if you are always on your guard, no evil desires will be able to enter your heart to rob it of its goodness.

365. *Q.* How long does godliness remain in man?

A. Iron is red so long as it is in the fire. It is black the moment that it is removed from fire. So, the human being is godly so long as he is in communion with God.

Egoism

366. *Q.* When does a man get salvation?

A. When his egoism dies.

367. So long as there is egoism, neither self-knowledge (*jnana*) nor liberation (*mukti*) is possible and no cessation of birth and death.

368. The sun can give heat and light to the whole world, but he can do nothing when the clouds are in the sky and shut out his rays. Similarly, so long as the cloud of egoism is in the soul the light of God does not shine upon it.

369. Egoism is like a cloud that keeps God hidden from our sight. If by the mercy of the *Guru* egoism vanishes, God is seen in His full glory. As, for instance, you see in the picture that Sri Ramachandra, who is God, is only two or three steps ahead of Lakshman (the *Jiva* or individual soul), but Sita (*maya*), coming in between the two, prevents Lakshman from having a view of Rama.

370. If I hold up this cloth before me, you will not see me any more, though I shall be as near you. So also, God is nearer to you than anything else, yet because of the screen of egoism you cannot see Him.

371. *Q.* Sir, why are we so bound? Why can we not see God?

A. Egoism is the *maya* for the *Jiva*. Egoism shuts the light out. When *'I'* will die, all trouble will cease. If by the grace of God the idea of "I am the non-doer is firmly settled in the heart, a man becomes free even in this life and there is no more fear for him.

The Deluded Say "It is I"

372. Those who seek for fame are under delusion. They forget that everything is ordained by the Great Disposer of all things—the Supreme Being, and that all is due to the Lord and to no one else. It is the wise who say always: "It is Thou, It is Thou, O Lord," but the ignorant and the deluded say: "It is I, It is I".

373. So long as you say "I know" or "I do not know," you look upon yourself as a person. My Divine Mother says: "It is only when I effect all *aham* (*I*-ness) in you that the undifferentiated (*my* impersonal aspect) may be realized in *samadhi*." Till then there is the '*I*' in me and before me.

374. Sankaracharya had a disciple who served him for a long time, but he did not give any instructions to him. Once when Sankara was seated alone, he heard the footsteps of some one coming behind. He called out: "Who is there?" The disciple answered: "It is I." The Acharya said: "If the word '*I*' is so dear to thee, then either expand it indefinitely, that is, know the universe as thyself, or renounce it altogether".

How to Destroy Egoism

375. *Q.* How can the idea of egohood be destroyed?

A. It requires constant practice to do it. In thrashing out rice from the paddy, one must look to it from time to time to see that the rice is properly husked; if not, one must of course go on thrashing.

376. In making delicate weighments one has to shake the balance from time to time to see whether the oscillating needle will every time come back to the middle point; if it does not do so, the weighment is incorrect. Similarly, a man must test himself from time to time to see whether he has conquered his lower self.

377. The dyspeptic knows too well that sour stuffs are injurious to him, but such is the force of association that their sight is enough to make his mouth water. So. even if one tries hard to suppress the idea of *I*-ness and *mine*-ness, yet in the field of action his unripe ego shows itself.

Ego as Servant of God

378. If you find that you cannot make this *'I'* go, then let it remain as the 'servant *I*' (*dasa ami*). There is not much to fear of mischief in the *'I'* which knows itself as "I am the servant of God; I am His devotee". Sweets beget dyspepsia, but the crystallized sugar candy is not among the sweets for it has not that injurious property.

379. The 'servant-*I*', the *'I'* of a devotee, or the *'I'* of a child is like the line drawn with a stick on a sheet of water. It does not last long.

380. If one ponders over the *'I'*, and tries to find out what it is, one sees it is only a word which denotes egoism. It is extremely difficult to shake off. Then one says: "You wicked *I*", if you will not go by any means, remain as the to shake off. Then one says: "You wicked *I*", (*paka ami*).

381. If you feel proud, feel so in the thought that you are the servant of God, the son of God. Great men have the nature of children. They are always children before God, so they have no egoism. All their strength is of God, belonging to and coming from Him, nothing of themselves.

Self-Will Merged in Divine Will

382. If one acquires the conviction that everything is done by God's will, that one is only the tool in the hands of God, then is one free even in this life. "Thou doest Thy work, they say: 'I do it!'"

383. Freedom will come when thy *'I'*-hood (egoism) will vanish and thy self-will be merged in the Divinity.

384. The true nature of the *Jiva* (individual soul) is eternal existence-knowledge-bliss. It is egoism that has brought about so many *upadhis* (limitations), and he has forgotten his own nature.

385. Know thyself and thou shalt then know the non-self and the Lord of all. What is my ego? Is it my hand or foot, or flesh or blood, or muscle or tendon? Ponder deep and thou shalt know that there is no such thing as *'I'*. As by continually peeling off the skin of an onion, so on analyzing the ego it will be found that there is not any real entity correspond-

ing to the ego. The ultimate result of all such analysis is God. When egoism drops away the Divinity manifests itself.

Will Egoism Die Fully

386. *Q.* Will egoism never die off fully?

A. The petals of the lotus drop off in time but they leave scars behind them. So, the egoism of man does go off entirely, but the traces of its former existence remain. They, however, are not at all active for evil.

387. The cup in which garlic juice is kept retains the nasty odour though it may be rubbed and scoured hundreds of times. Egohood also is such an obstinate creature that it never leaves us completely.

388. The leaves of the cocoa-palm fall off, but leave their marks behind on the trunk. Similarly, so long as one has his body, there will remain the mark of egoism, how high soever a man may advance in spirituality. But these traces of egoism do not bind such men to the world or cause their rebirth.

Two Egos

389. There are two egos, one ripe and the other unripe (*paka ami* and *kancha ami*); "Nothing is mine; whatever I see, feel or hear, nay, even this body is not mine. I am always eternal, free, and all-knowing"—the ego that has this idea is the ripe one (*paka ami*) while the unripe ego (*kancha ami*) is that which thinks: "This is my house, my child, my wife. my body, etc."

390. The ego of the servant, the ego of the devotee, the ego of *vidya,* these are the names of the ripe ego (*paka ami*).

391. *Q.* What is called the 'mischievous *I*'?

A. The '*I*' which says: "Don't they know me? I have so much money, who is so wealthy as myself? Who dares surpass me?"

392. The nature of *tamas* is egoism which is bred of ignorance.

All Belong to God

393. When shall I be free? When the '*I*' has vanished. '*I* and *mine*' is ignorance; '*thou* and *thine*' is true knowledge. The true devotee always says: "O Lord, Thou art the doer

(*karta*), Thou doest everything. I am only a machine. I do whatever Thou makes me to do. And all this is Thy glory. This home and this family are Thine, not mine; I have only the right to serve as Thou ordainest".

394. Always ponder within yourself in this wise: "All these family concerns are not mine; they are God's, and I am His servant. I have come here to obey His commands". When this idea becomes firm, there remains nothing which a man may call his own.

395. As a wet-nurse in a rich family brings up the child of her master, loving the baby as if it were her own, but knows well that she has no claim upon it; so think ye also that you are but trustees and guardians of your children whose real father is the Lord God in the Heaven.

396. Two are the occasions when the Lord smiles. First, when brothers remove the chains which partition off the family property, saying: "This is mine and that is thine"; and secondly, when the physician of a dying patient declares: "I shall make him live".

Caste Distinctions

397. *Q.* Is it proper to keep the Brahmanical thread?

A. When the knowledge of Self is gained, all fetters fall off of themselves. Then there is no distinction between a Brahmin and a Sudra, a high caste or a low caste. In that state the sacred-thread-sign of caste falls away of itself. But so long as a man has the consciousness of distinction and difference, he should not forcibly throw it off.

398. When a fruit becomes ripe and falls of itself, it tastes very sweet; but when an unripe fruit is plucked and artificially ripened, it does not taste so sweet and becomes shrivelled up. So, when a man has realized the Brahman in everything, then, and not till then, can he have no distinction of caste. But so long as this exalted state of Divine wisdom is not reached, none can escape the recognition of superiority and inferiority in others, and as such one must have to observe caste distinctions.

399. Once a student questioned Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna: "As the same Hari dwells in every being, what harm is there in taking food out of any man's hands?" In reply the

Bhagavan asked him whether he was a Brahmin. When the student said: "Yes," the Bhagavan said: "That is why you put me the question. Suppose you light a match and heap over it a lot of well-dried wood, what will become of the fire?" The student answered: "The fire will get extinguished, being choked by the wood." Again the Bhagavan said: "Suppose a wild fire is blazing and you throw in it a lot of green banana trees, what will become of them?" The student replied: "They will be reduced to ashes in a moment". "Similarly," said the Bhagavan, "if the spirituality in you is very weak, you have to fear its getting extinguished by taking food indiscriminately out of everyone's hands. If it is very strong, any food that goes within will not affect you".

400. When a wound is perfectly healed, the slough falls off of itself; but if the slough be taken off earlier, it bleeds. Similarly, when the perfection of knowledge is reached by a man, the distinctions of caste fall off from him, but it is wrong for the ignorant to break such distinctions.

401. When a storm blows it is impossible then to distinguish between a peeppul (*asvattha*) tree and a banyan (*bata*) tree; so when the storm of true knowledge (the knowledge of one universal existence) blows within a man, there can be no distinction of caste.

402. The spiritually-minded belong to a caste of their own irespective of all social conventions.

403. When a man is on the plains he sees the lowly grass and the mighty pine tree and says: "How big is the tree and how small is the grass!" But when he ascends the mountain and looks from its high peak on the plain below, the mighty pine tree and the lowly grass blend into one indistinguishable mass of green verdure. So, in the sight of the worldly there are differences of rank and position—one is a king, another is a cobbler; one a father, another a son; and so on; but when the divine sight is opened, all appear as equal and one, and there remains no distinction of good and bad, high and low.

Unity in Diversity

404. True knowledge leads to unity, and ignorance to diversity.

405. When I look upon chaste women of respectable families, I see in them the Mother Divine arrayed in the garb of a chaste lady; and again, when I look upon the public women of the city, sitting in their *verandas*, arrayed in the garb of immorality and shamelessness, I see in them also the Divine Mother sporting in a different way.

406. Man is like a pillow-case. The colour of the one may be red, that of another blue, that of a third black, but all contain the same cotton. So, it is with man—one is beautiful, another is black, a third holy, a fourth wicked, but the Divine One dwells within them all.

407. Every being is Narayana (Narayana is the same as the Brahman). Man or animal, sage or knave, nay, the whole universe is Narayana, the Supreme Spirit.

408. Says God: "I am the snake that biteth and the charmer that healeth; I am the judge that condemneth and the executioner that whippeth".

409. God tells the thief to go and steal, and at the same time warns the householder against the thief.

410. A jar kept in water is full of water inside and outside. Thus the soul immersed in God sees the all-pervading Spirit within and without.

How to Conquer Human Weakness

411. *Q.* How may we conquer the old Adam in us?

A. When the fruit grows out of the flower, the petals drop off of themselves. So, when the Divinity in thee increases, the weaknesses of thy human nature will all vanish of their own accord.

412. Humanity must die before the Divinity manifests itself. But this Divinity must, in turn, die before the higher manifestation of the Blissful Mother takes place. It is on the bosom of the dead Divinity (Siva) that the Blissful Mother dances Her dance celestial.

Love of God

413. If you fill an earthen vessel with water and set it apart upon a shelf, the water in it will dry up in a few days; but if you place the same vessel immersed in water, it will

remain filled as long as it is kept there. Even so is the case of your love for the Lord God. Fill and enrich your bosom with the love of God for a time and then employ yourself in other affairs, forgetting Him all the while, and then you are sure to find within a short time that your heart has become poor and vacant and devoid of that precious love. But if you keep your heart immersed always in the ocean of Divine love, your heart is sure to remain ever full to over-flowing with the water of the Divine love.

414. Dear friend, the more I live, the more I learn every day of the mysteries of love and devotion.

415. *Q.* How should one love God?

A. As the true and chaste wife loves her husband and the niggardly miser loves his hoarded wealth, so the devotee must love the Lord with all his heart and soul.

416. *Q.* Can Divine love be acquired by reading books?

A. The Hindu almanacs contain predictions of the annual rainfall, mentioning how many inches of rain will fall throughout the country. But if we squeeze the book so full of rain predictions, not even a drop of water can be got out of it. So, also, many good sayings are to be found in holy books, but merely reading them will not make one spiritual. One must practise the virtues taught therein to acquire the love of God.

417. God, His scripture (the *Bhagavatam*), and His devotee Bhakta are all to be regarded as one, that is, in one and the same light.

418. *Q.* How does a true lover see God?

A. He sees Him as His nearest and dearest relative, just as the shepherd women of Brindavan (Gopi) saw in Sri Krishna not the Lord of the universe (Jagannath) but their own beloved Gopinath (Lord of the Gopi).

The God-Lover

419. *Q.* Why does the God-lover find such ecstatic pleasure in addressing the Deity as Mother?

A. Because the child is more free with its mother, and consequently she is dearer to the child than any one else.

420. A logician once asked Sri Ramakrishna: "What are

knowledge, knower, and the object known?" To which he replied: "Good man, I do not know all these niceties of scholastic learning. I know only my Divine Mother, and that I am Her son."

421. *Q.* Why does the God-lover renounce everything for Him?

A. The moth, after seeing the light never returns to darkness; the ant dies in the sugar-heap, but never retreats therefrom; similarly, the God-lover gladly sacrifices his life for the attainment of Divine Bliss and cares for nothing else.

422. Some get tipsy with even a small glass of wine, others require two or three bottles to make them intoxicated. But both get equal and full pleasure of intoxication. Similarly, some devotees become full of ecstasy even by a glimpse of the Divine glory, while others get intoxicated with the celestial bliss by coming in direct contact with the Lord of the universe. But both are equally fortunate and blissful.

423. A true devotee who has drunk deep the Divine love is like a veritable drunkard and as such cannot always observe the rules of propriety.

424. The more you scratch the ring-worm, the greater grows the itching, and the more pleasure do you find in the scratching. Similarly, the devotees once beginning to sing His praises, never get tired of it, but continue for hours and hours together.

Fellowship Among True Devotees

425. *Q.* Why does not the God-lover like to live in solitude?

A. The hemp-smoker finds no pleasure in smoking without company. The pious man like hemp-smoker finds no pleasure in singing the sacred name and praises of the Almighty alone.

426. A woman naturally feels shy to relate to all the conversation she daily holds with her husband. She never tells it to any one, nor feels inclined to do so; and if it gets divulged by any means she feels annoyed. But she herself would relate it without reserve to her intimate companion, nay, she would feel impatient to tell it to her and find pleasure in so doing. Similarly, a devotee of God does not like to relate to any one

but a true Bhakta (devotee), the ecstatic joy which he experiences in his Divine Communion; nay, sometimes he becomes impatient of relating his experiences to him and feels happy to do so.

427. If a strange animal enters a herd of cows, it is soon driven off by the combined attacks of the whole herd. But let only a cow enter, all the other cows will make friends with her by mutual licking of bodies. Thus, when a devotee meets with another devotee, both experience great happiness and feel loath to separate; but when a scoffer enters the circle, they carefully avoid him.

A True Devotee's Love Inexhaustible

428. *Q.* Why is there no end to the spiritual thoughts and devotional feelings of a devotee?

A. When grains are measured out to the purchaser in the granary of a rich merchant, the measurer does not leave his seat but goes on measuring unceasingly while the attendant women incessantly supply him with basketfuls of grain from the main store; a small grocer, on the other hand, has neither such attendants nor is his store inexhaustible. Similarly, God Himself constantly inspires the new thoughts and the wise sentiments that arise in the heart of his true devotee (*Bhakta*); whereas the book-learned who draw their inspiration from books are like the petty grocers who soon find their stock exhausted.

429. There are three kinds of love, unselfish (*samartha*), mutual (*samanjasa*), and selfish (*sadharni*). The unselfish love is of the highest kind. The lover only minds the welfare of the beloved and does not care for his own sufferings. In mutual love the lover not only wants the happiness of his beloved but has an eye towards his own happiness also. It is middling. The selfish love is the lowest. It only looks towards its own happiness, no matter whether the beloved suffers weal and woe.

432. The flint may remain for myriads of years under water, still it does not lose its inner fire. Strike it with steel whenever you like, and out flashes the glowing spark. So is the true devotee firm in his faith. Though he may remain surrounded by all the impurities of the world, he never loses his

faith and love. He becomes entranced as soon as he hears the name of the Almighty.

Name of Hari and Devotional Practices

431. A man who finds all hair of his body standing on end at the bare mention of Sri Hari's name, through sheer ecstasy, and who sheds tears of love on hearing the name of God, reaches his last birth.

432. Hari (from *hri,* to steal) means: "He who steals our hearts," and *Haribala* means "Hari is our strength".

433. Satan never enters the house wherein are always sung the praises of Hari.

Prayers and Penances

434. Totapuri used to say: "If the brass pot be not rubbed daily, it will get rusty. So, if a man does not meditate on the Deity daily, his heart will become impure." To him the Bhagavan replied: "Yes, but if the vessel be of gold, it does not require daily cleaning. The man who has reached God, no more requires prayers and penances".

435. *Q.* Is there really any efficacy in prayers?

A. Yes, when mind and speech unite in earnestly asking for a thing, that prayer is answered. The prayers of that man are of no avail who sayeth with his mouth: "These are all Thine, O Lord!" but who at the same time thinketh in his heart, all of them to be his.

436. Pray to the Divine Mother in this wise: Give me, O Mother! love that knows no incontinence and faith adamantine that cannot be shaken.

Faith

437. He who has faith possesseth all, and he who lacks in faith verily lacks in all.

438. If thou hast faith thou shalt attain to that for which thou longest.

439. Boil your sugar well in a living and active fire. As long as there is earth and impurity in it, the sweet infusion

will smoke and simmer. But when all impurity is cast out, there is neither smoke nor sound, but the delicious crystalline fluid heaves itself in its unmixed worth, and whether liquid or solid is the delight of men and gods. Such is the character of the man of faith.

440. A stone may remain for myriads of years in water and the water will never penetrate it. But clay is soon softened and wetted through and through by contact with water. So, the strong heart of the faithful does not despair in the midst of trials and persecutions, but the man of weak faith is easily shaken even by the most trifling cause.

441. The locomotive engine easily drags along a train of heavily-laden carriages. So, the loving children of God, firm in their faith and devotion to Him, feel no trouble in passing through all the worries and anxieties of life, and leading men along with them to God.

442. The water of a swiftly-flowing current in some places move round and round in eddies and whirlpools; but quickly passing these, they resume their straight and swift course. So, the heart of the pious sometimes falls into the whirl-pools of despondency, grief and unbelief; but it is only a momentary aberration. It does not last long.

443. The anvil of a blacksmith remains immovable under the countless strokes of hammers. Even so, man should endure with infinite patience all trials and persecutions that may come upon him.

HUMILITY

444. The iron must be heated several times and hammered a hundred times before it becomes good steel. Then only it becomes fit to be made into a sharp sword and can be bent in any way you like. So, man must be heated several times in the furnace of tribulations and hammered with the persecutions of the world before he becomes pure and humble.

445. If thou wishest to thread the needle, make the thread pointed and remove all extraneous fibres. Then the thread will easily enter into the eye of the needle. So, if thou wishest to concentrate thy heart on God, be meek, humble, and poor in spirit, and remove all the filaments of desire.

446. The tree laden with fruit always bends low. So, if thou wishest to be great, be lowly and meek.

447. The rain-water never stands on high ground but runs down to the lowest level; even so the mercy of God runs into the hearts of the lowly, but drains off from the hearts of the vain and proud.

448. The scale that is heavy bends down, but the lighter scale of the balance rises up. So, the man of merit and ability is always humble and meek, but the fool is always puffed up with vanity.

Vanity

449. Vanity is like a heap of rubbish or ashes on which the water, as soon as it falls, dries away. Prayers and contemplations produce no effect on the heart puffed up with vanity.

450. Be as devoid of vanity as the cast-away leaf before the high wind.

451. The vanities of all others may gradually die out, but the vanity of a saint as regards his sainthood is hard indeed to wear away.

452. A man after fourteen years' penance in a solitary forest obtained at last the power of walking on water. Overjoyed at this, he went to his *Guru* and said: "Master, master, I have acquired the power of walking on water." The master rebukingly replied: "Fie, O child! is this the result of thy fourteen years' labours? Verily thou hast obtained only that which is worth a penny; for what thou hast accomplished after fourteen years' arduous labour ordinary men do by paying a penny to the boatman".

453. A youthful disciple of the Bhagavan once acquired the power of reading the heart of another. Overjoyed at this, he related this experience to his master, and the Bhagavan rebuked him by saying: "Shame on thee, child! Do not waste thy energies on these petty things."

Divine Grace

454. A certain pious man used to count the beads of a rosary constantly. silently uttering the name of the Deity. To

him the Bhagavan said: "Why dost thou stick to one place? Go forward." The pious man replied: "It cannot be done without His grace." The Bhagavan said: "The breeze of His grace is blowing night and day over thy head; unfurl the sails of thy boat (mind) if thou wantest to make rapid progress through the ocean of life".

455. The wind of God's grace is incessantly blowing. Lazy sailors on this sea of life do not take advantage of it. But the active and the able always keep their minds unfurled to catch the friendly breeze, and thus reach their destination very soon.

456. In this Iron Age (*Kali Yuga*) three days are enough to make a man perfect.

457. As long as there is no breeze blowing, we fan ourselves to alleviate heat; but when the breeze blows for all men, rich and poor, we give up fanning. We should persevere ourselves to reach our final goal as long as there is no help from above; but when fortunately that help comes to any, let him stop labouring and persevering, otherwise not.

458. Fans should be discarded when the wind blows. Prayers and penances should be discarded when the grace of God descends.

PERSEVERANCE

459. The hereditary agriculturist does not leave off tilling the soil though it may not rain for twelve consecutive years; while a merchant, who has but lately taken himself to the plough, is discouraged by one season of drought. The true believer is never discouraged if even with his life-long devotion he fails to see God.

460. Many times must you sink and struggle in water before you learn to swim. So, none can enjoy at once the felicity of swimming calmly on the ocean of Divine Bliss until he has made himself fit for it by wearisome struggles and trials.

461. There is a little chance of the ship running amiss so long as its compass points towards the true North. So, if the mind of man—the compass needle of the ship of life, is turned always towards the *Para-Brahman* (Absolute Spirit) without oscillation, it will steer clear of every danger.

Become As a Child

462. How sweet is the simplicity of a child! He prefers a doll to all the riches and the wealth of the world. So is the faithful devotee. No one else can throw aside all wealth and all honour to take God only.

463. So long as one does not become simple like a child one does not get Divine illumination. Forget all the worldly knowledge that thou hast acquired and become as ignorant as a child, and then wilt thou get the Divine wisdom.

464. Lunatics, drunkards and children sometimes give out the truth unconsciously, as if inspired by the Heaven.

Truthfulness

465. Eternal Truth shall not be realized by one who is not truthful.

Resignation to the Will of God

466. *Q.* What are you to do when you are placed in this world?

A. Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him and there will be no more trouble for you. Then you will come to know that everything is done by His will.

467. There is no path safer and smoother than that of *Ba-kalama*. Ba-kalama means resigning the self to the will of the Almighty, to have no consciousness that anything is "mine".

468. To live in the world or to leave it depends upon the will of God. Therefore work, leaving everything to Him. What else can you do?

469. The value of the figure one (1) may be raised by adding zeroes to it, but if the figure one be omitted, the zeroes of themselves have no value. Similarly, so long as the *Jiva* (individual soul) clings to the Supreme One, it has value, otherwise all of its efforts and works are in vain.

470. *Q.* What is the nature of absolute reliance?

A. It is that happy state of comfort felt by a fatigued worker when, reclining on a pillow, he smokes at leisure after a hard day's toil; it is a cessation of all worries and anxieties.

371. As dry leaves are blown about here and there by the wind and have no choice of their own and make no exertion; so, those who depend upon God, move in harmony with His will, and can have no will and put forth no effort of their own.

472. A shallow pool of water in an open field will soon be dried up though no one may lessen the quantity of water by using it. So, a sinner is sometimes purified by simply resigning himself totally and absolutely to the mercy and the grace of God.

473. There are some fish which have many sets of bones, and others have one, but the eater cleans all the bones and eats the fish; so, some men have many sins and others have a few, but the grace of God purifies them all in time.

474. The young monkey verily clasps and clings to its mother. The young kitten cannot clasp its mother but mews piteously wherever it is placed by her. If the young monkey lets go its hold on its mother, it falls down and gets hurt. This is because it depends upon its own strength; but the kitten runs no such risk, as the mother herself carries it about from place to place. Such is the difference between self-reliance and entire resignation to the will of God.

Thought of Divine Mother

475. When unavoidably entering into places where there may be temptation, carry always with thee the thought of thy Divine Mother. She will protect thee from the many evils that may be lurking even in thy heart. The presence of thy mother will make thee away from evil deeds and evil thoughts.

476. Lust and wealth have drowned the whole world in sin. Woman is disarmed when you view her as the manifestation of the Divine Mother.

Strength of an Aspirant

477. *Q.* Where does the strength of an aspirant lie?

A. He is a child of God, and tears are his greatest strength. As a mother gives her consent to fulfil the desire of her importunately weeping child, so God vouchsafes to His weeping son whatever he is crying for.

378. The tears of repentance and the tears of happiness flow from two different corners of the eye. The tears of repentance flow from the side near the nose, and the tears of happiness from the other extremity.

Continual Devotion

479. *Q.* Sometimes peace reigns in the heart, but why does it not always last long?

A. The fire made by the burning of the bamboo is soon extinguished unless kept alive by constant blowing. Continual devotion is necessary to keep alive the fire of spirituality.

480. *Q.* How can I perform devotion when I must always think of my daily bread?

A. He for whom thou workest will supply thy necessities. God hath made provision for thy support before He sent thee here.

481. To kill another swords and shields are needed, whilst to kill one's own self even a pin will do ; so, to teach others one must study many scriptures and sciences, whilst to acquire self-illumination firm faith in a single motto will suffice.

Single-mindedness

482. As the village maidens in India carry four or five pots of water placed one over the other upon their heads, talking all the while with one another about their joys and sorrows, and yet do not allow a drop of water to get spilt ; so must the traveller in the path of virtue walk along. In whatever circumstances he may be placed, let him always take heed that his heart does not swerve from the true path.

483. Friend, I learn as long as I live.

Mental Concentration

484. Chant forth the sweet name of Hari (God), keeping time all the while by clapping your hands, and thus you will acquire mental concentration. If you clap your hands sitting under a tree, the birds on the boughs thereof will fly away in all directions, and when you chant forth the name of Hari and clap your hands, all evil thoughts will fly away from your mind.

485. As a marksman learns to shoot by first taking aim at large objects, and the more he acquires the facility, the greater becomes the ease with which he can shoot at smaller marks on the target; so, when the mind has been trained to be fixed on images having form, it becomes easy for it to be fixed on images having no form.

486. As a boy begins to learn writing by drawing big scrawls before he can master the small-hand, so, we must aquire the power of concentration by fixing the mind first on forms, and when we have attained success therein, we can easily fix it upon the formless.

487. The easiest means of concentrating the mind is to contemplate the flame of a candle. Its inmost blue zone is the casual body or *karana-sharira*. By fixing the mind on it concentration is soon obtained. The luminous zone that envelops the blue flame represents the *sukshma-sharira* or the subtle body, and the outermost represents the gross body or *sthula-sharira*.

488. At the beginning a man should always try to concentrate his mind in a lonely place, otherwise, many things may distract it. If we keep milk and water together, they are sure to get mixed; but if the milk be changed into butter by churning, the transformed milk (butter), instead of getting itself mixed with water, will float upon it. So, when by constant practice a man is able to effect mental concentration, wherever he may be, his mind will always rise above his environments and rest on God.

MEDITATION

489. In the course of his meditation a beginner sometimes falls into a kind of sleep that goes by the name of *yoganidra*. At that time he invariably sees some kind of divine visions.

490. "To him who is perfect in meditation salvation is very near," is an old saying. Do you know when a man becomes perfect in meditation? When, as soon as he sits down to meditate, he becomes surrounded with Divine atmosphere and his soul communes with God.

491. He who at the time of contemplation is entirely unconscious of everything outside—so much so that he would not know if birds were to make nests in his hair—has acquired the perfection of meditation.

State of Samadhi

492. There are few who can attain *samadhi* and get rid of *aham* (*I*-hood). Generally it does not go. Reason and discriminate indefinitely, this *aham* comes back to you again and again. Today you cut the peppul tree and tomorrow you see it has sprouted forth.

493. When the state of *samadhi* is attained after a process of severe struggle with one's own lower nature and assiduous application to culture for Self-knowledge, the ego with all its train vanishes. But it is so difficult to attain *samadhi*. The ego is so persistent. For this reason alone there is the coming again and into this world.

494. *Q*. What is the state of one's mind in *samadhi*?

A. It is the state of bliss which is experienced by the live fish which, being kept out of water for some time, is again put into it.

495. There are hills and mountains, dales and valleys under the sea, but they are not visible from the surface. So, in the state of *samadhi*, when one floats upon the ocean of *sat-chit-ananda*, all human consciousness lies latent.

496. It is a state of going back and forth. You go back to the Supreme Being and your personality becomes one with His personality. This is *samadhi*. You then retrace your steps. You get back your ego and return to the point whence you started, only to see that your ego is derived from the same Supreme Being, and that God, man and nature are faces of the one Reality, so that if you hold fast to one of them you realize them all.

497. Do you know how a man of *sattvika* (pure nature) medidates? He meditates in the dead of night, upon his bed, within the curtain, so that he may not be seen by men.

Should Devotee Adopt Special Costume

498. *Q*. Should the devotee adopt any particular costume?

A. The adoption of a suitable costume is good. Dressed in the Sannyasin's orange robes or carrying the religious mendicant's tambourine and cymbals, a man can never utter light and profane things or sign profane songs. But a man dressed in

the smart style of a beau will naturally have his heart inclined to think worldly thoughts and sing love songs.

499. *Q.* What is the good of wearing the orange-coloured dress of an ascetic? What is there in a dress?

A. The orange dress brings with it pure associations. The wearing of worn-out shoes and torn clothes brings thoughts of humility into the mind ; smartly in pants and coat, with patent leather shoes on, makes one naturally feel elated with pride and vanity ; by wearing the black-bordered *dhuti* one feels impelled to be lively and sing love songs. The wearing of the orange garb of the Sannyasin causes sacred thoughts naturally to enter the mind. Every kind of dress has its own associations, although the dress has its own associations, although the dress in itself means nothing very particular.

500. If a man sees a pleader, he naturally thinks of cases and causes ; similarly, on seeing a pious devotee the man remembers his God and the hereafter.

501. As in a pane of glass on which quick-silver has been laid, one can see his face reflected, so in the chaste heart of a totally continent devotee is reflected the image of the Almighty.

The Perfect Man

502. Of itself does the bee come to the full-blown flower when its sweet aroma is wafted by the breeze. The ants come of themselves to the spot where sweets are placed. No one need invite the bee or the ant. So, when a man becomes pure and perfect, the sweet influence of his character is diffused everywhere, and all who seek after truth are naturally drawn towards him, and he need not be moving to and fro in search of an audience to preach the truth to.

CHAPTER IV

PARABLES

"Mother, I am yantra (*the machine*), *Thou art* yantri (*one who works the machine*) ; *I am the room, Thou art the tenant ; I am the sheath, Thou art the sword ; I am the chariot, Thou art the charioteer ; I do just as Thou makest me do ; I speak as Thou makest me speak ; I behave as Thou makest me behave ; not 'I', not 'I', but 'Thou'."*

504. A place was enclosed by means of a high wall. The men outside did not know what sort of place it was. Once four persons determined to find out what was inside by scaling the wall with a ladder. As soon as the first man ascended to the top of the wall, he laughed out: *"Ha, Ha, Ha !"* and jumped in. The second also, as soon as he ascended, similarly laughed aloud and jumped in, and so did the third. When the fourth and last man got up to the top of the wall, he found stretched beneath him a large and beautiful garden containing pleasant groves and delicious fruits. Though strongly tempted to jump down and enjoy the scene, he resisted the temptation, and coming down the ladder, preached the glad tidings about the beautiful garden to all outsiders. The Brahman is like the walled garden. He who sees It, forgets his own existence and with ecstatic joy rushes headlong unto It to attain to *moksha,* or absolute freedom. Such are the holy men and liberated saints of the world. But the Saviours of humanity are those who see God, and being at the same time anxious to share their happiness of Divine vision with others, refuse the final liberation (*moksha*), and willingly undergo the troubles of rebirth in the world in order to teach and lead struggling humanity to its ultimate goal.

505. A wood-cutter led a very miserable life with the small means he could procure by daily selling the load of wood brought from a neighbouring forest. Once a Sannyasin who was wending his way through the forest, saw him at work and advised him to proceed onward into the interior recesses of

the forest, intimating him that he would be a gainer thereby. The wood-cutter obeyed the injunction and proceeded onward until he came to a sandalwood tree, and being much pleased, he took away with him as many sandal logs as he could carry and sold them in the market and derived much profit. Then he began to think within himself why the good Sannyasin did not tell him anything about the wood of the sandal trees, but simply advised him to proceed onward into the interior of the forest. So the next day he went on beyond the place of the sandalwood, and at last came upon a copper mine, and he took with him as much copper as he could carry, and selling it in the market, got much money by it. Next day, without stopping at the copper mine, he proceeded further still, as the *Sadhu* had advised him to do, and came upon a silver mine, and took with him as much of it as he could carry and sold it all and got even more money; and so daily proceeding further and further, he got at gold mines and diamond mines and at last became exceedingly rich. Such is also the case with man who aspires after true Knowledge. If he does not stop in his progress after attaining a few extraordinary and supernatural powers, he at last becomes really rich in the eternal knowledge of Truth.

506. A man began to sink a well, but when he had dug down a few feet another man came to him and said: "Brother, why are you labouring here in vain? You will not find a water-spring underneath; nothing but dry sand will come out." Believing in his words, he left that place and, selecting another spot, he began to dig. There he met a stranger who assured him saying: "Brother, formerly there was a well here, why are you wasting your energy? If you go a little further south and dig, you will find a very good water-spring." Immediately he followed his advice; but there again another man prevented him from digging. Thus being interrupted again and again at every spot which he had selected, he at last failed to sink the well. Similarly, in the spiritual path many people have lost everything by following the directions of irresponsible instructors. Now they follow one master, but, having neither firmness of faith nor strength to resist the temptations, trials and tribulations which come in their way, they abandon him and obey another, and then a third; and so, eventually they either become rank atheists or arrive at the conclusion that in this life it is

impossible to attain spirituality. He, whoever wishes to be spiritual, must have firm faith in one master and follow his directions with implicit obedience and infinite patience.

507. A man wanted to cross the river. A sage gave him an amulet and said: "This will carry thee across". The man, taking it in his hand began to walk over the water. When he reached the middle of the river, curiosity entered into his heart, and he opened the amulet to see what was in it. Therein he found, written on a piece of paper, the sacred name of Rama (Lord). The man at this said deprecatingly: "Is this the only secret?" No sooner had he said this than he sank down. It is faith in the name of the Lord that works miracles, for faith is life and doubt is death.

508. Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra had to bridge the ocean before he could cross over to Lanka (Ceylon). But Hanuman, his faithful monkey-servant, with one jump crossed the ocean through the firmness of his faith in Rama. Here the servant achieved more than the master, simply through faith.

509. A disciple, having firm faith in the infinite power of his *Guru,* walked over a river even by pronouncing his name. The *Guru,* seeing this, thought within himself: "Well, is there such a power even in my name? Then I must be very great and powerful, no doubt!" The next day he also tried to walk over the river pronouncing *'I, I, I',* but no sooner had he stepped into the water than he sank and was drowned. Faith can achieve miracles, while vanity or egoism is the death of man.

510. A milk-maid used to supply milk to a Brahmin priest living on the other side of the river. Owing to the irregularities of boat service, she could not supply it punctually every day. Once being rebuked for her lateness, the poor woman said: "What can I do? I start early from my house but have to wait a long time at the river bank for the boatman and the passengers." The priest said: "Woman! they cross the ocean of life by uttering the name of God and canst thou not cross this little river?" The simple-hearted woman became very glad at heart, on finding this easy means of crossing the river. From the next day the milk was supplied early in the morning, and the milk-maid was also happy as she saved her fare. One day the priest said to the woman: "How is it that you are no longer late now?" She said: "I cross the river by uttering the name

of the Lord as you told me to do, and don't stand in need of the boatman." The priest could not believe this and said: "Canst thou show me how thou crossest the river?" The woman took him with her and began to walk over the water. Looking behind, the woman saw his sad plight and said: "How is this, sir, thou art uttering the name of the Deity with thy mouth, but at the same time with thy hands thou art trying to keep thy clothes untouched by water? Thou dost not fully rely on the Diety." Entire resignation and absolute faith in God are at the root of all miraculous deeds.

511. A father was once passing by a field having his two sons with him. One he had taken up in his arms and the other was walking along with him holding his father's hand. They saw a kite flying and this boy, having let go his hold on his father's hand, began to clap with joy, crying: "See, papa! there is a kite!" But as he had let go the hold of his father's hand he stumbled and got hurt. But the boy that was carried by the father also clapped his hands with joy, but did not fall as he was held by his father. The former represents self-help in spiritual life while the latter indicates self-surrender.

512. Two men went into a garden. The worldly-wise man no sooner entered the gate than he began to count the number of the mango-trees, how many mangoes each tree bore, and what might be the approximate price of the orchard. His companion went to the owner, made his acquaintance, and quitely going under a mango-tree, began to pluck the fruit and eat it with the owner's consent. Now, who is the wiser of the two? Eat mangoes, it will satisfy your hunger. What is the good of counting the leaves and of vain calculations? The proud man of intellect is vainly busy in finding out the why and wherefore of creation, while the humble man of wisdom makes acquaintance with the Creator and enjoys the Supreme Bliss in this world.

513. Once the Bhagavan, addressing one of his favourite disciples, said: "When syrup is kept in a large basin flies come from all sides and sit upon it. Some drink the sweet juice sitting on the brim of the vessel, while others fall into it and enjoy rolling and plunging into it. Similarly, will you taste the divine nectar of the *Sacchidananda* (absolute existence, intelligence and bliss) leisurely from the brim and then flee

from it, or will you enjoy the pleasure of tasting it and of plunging yourself at once into it?" The disciple replied: "I like to drink from the brim and fly away and live, but not to roll in the juice and die." At this the Master said: "You fool! He who plunges himself into the ocean of nectar never dies but becomes immortal."

514. Ramachandra, after being enlightened by the precepts of his *Guru,* determined to renounce the world. Dasaratha, his father, sent the sage Vashistha to instruct him. Vashistha saw that intense *vairagyam* (non-attachment) had come upon Rama. He said: "Rama, first reason with me and then leave the world. I ask you, is the world separate from God? If it be so, you are at liberty to forsake it." Pondering over these words Rama saw that it was God who manifested Himself as the *Jiva* (individual ego) and the world, and in His Being everything existed. So, Rama remained silent.

515. When it was argued that a family-man (*grihastha*) may remain in the family, but may have no concern with it, and consequently may remain uncontaminated by the world, an illustration was cited to refute such an argument, which is as follows:

A poor Brahmin once came to one of the family-men who were unconcerned with family affairs, to beg some money. When the beggar asked of him some money, he replied: "Sir, I never touch money. Why are you wasting your time in begging of me?" The Brahmin, however, would not go away. Tired with his importunate entreaties, the man at last resolved in his mind to give him a rupee, and told him: "Well, sir, come tomorrow, I shall see what I can do for you." Then going in, this typical family-man being unconcerned told his wife, who was the manager of his affairs: "Look here, dear, a poor Brahmin is in great difficulty, and wants something of me. I have made up my mind to give him a rupee. What is your opinion about it?" "Aha! what a generous fellow you are!" she replied at the name of a rupee. "Rupees are not like leaves and stones, to be thrown away without any thought." "Well, dear," replied the husband in an apologizing tone, "The man is very poor and we should not give him less than a rupee." "No!" replied the wife, "I cannot spare that much; here is a two-anna bit and you can give him that if you like." The

man of course had no other alternative, being himself unconcerned in all such worldly matters, and he took what his wife gave him. Next day the beggar came and received only a two-anna bit. Such uncontaminated family-men are really henpecked persons who are solely guided by their wives, and as such are very poor specimens of humanity.

516. Once a God-intoxicated *Sadhu* (saint) came to the Kali-temple of Rani Rashmoni where the Bhagavan lived. One day this saint did not get any food, and, though feeling hungry, he did not ask anybody for it; but seeing a dog eating the remnant of a feast thrown away in a corner on used leaf-dishes, he went there, and embracing the dog said: "Brother, how is it that thou eatest without giving me a share?" So saying, he began to eat along with the dog. Having finished his meal in this strange company, the sage entered the temple of the Mother Kali and prayed with such an earnestness of devotion that made the temple almost shake. When having finished his prayer, he was going away, the Bhagavan told his nephew, Hriday Mukherjee: "Go and follow this man and tell me what he says". Hriday followed him to some distance, when the sage turning round said: "Why followest me?" And Mriday replied: "Sir! Give me some advice." The sage replied: "When the water of the dirty ditch and the younder glorious Ganges will appear one in thy sight, and the sound of this flageolet and the noise of that crowd will have no distinction to thy ear, then thou shalt reach the Divine wisdom."

When Hriday returned and told this the Bhagavan, he said: "That man has reached the higher state of ecstasy which is the result of Divine wisdom."

The *Sadhus* roam about like children or like mad men, and in various other disguises.

517. Once a holy man (*Sadhu*) while passing through a crowded street accidentally trod upon the toe of a wicked person. The wicked man, furious with rage, beat the saint mercilessly till he fell on the ground in a state of unconsciousness. His disciples took great pains and adopted various measures to bring him back to consciousness, and when they saw that he was coming round a little, one of them asked: "Sir, do you recognize who is now serving you?" The *Sadhu* replied:

"He who beat me". A true saint finds no distinction between friend and foe.

518. The *Avadhuta* (a great *Tantrika Yogi*) saw a bridal procession passing through a meadow with the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets and with great pomp. Hard by the road through which the procession was passing he saw a hunter inattentive to the noise and pomp of the procession, casting not even a passing look at it. The *Avadhuta,* saluting the hunter, said: "Sir, thou art my *Guru.* When I sit in meditation, let my mind be concentrated upon the object of meditation as thine has been on the bird."

519. An angler was fishing in a pond. The *Avadhuta* approaching him asked: "Brother, which way leads to such and such a place?" The float of the rod at that time was indicating that the fish was nibbling the bait; so the man did not give any reply, but was all attention to his fishing-rod. When the fish was caught, he turned round and said: "What is it you have been saying, sir?" The *Avadhuta* saluted him and said: "Sir, thou art my *Guru,* When I sit in the contemplation of the *Paramatman* (the Supreme Spirit), let me follow thy example and before finishing my devotion let me not attend to anything else."

520. A heron was slowly walking to catch a fish. Behind, there was a hunter aiming an arrow at it, but the bird was totally unmindful of this fact. The *Avadhuta* saluting the heron said: "When I sit in meditation, let me follow thy example and never turn back to see who is behind me."

521. A kite with a fish in its beak was followed by a host of crows and other kites, which were screeching and pecking at it and were trying to snatch the fish away. In whatever direction it went the crowd of kites and crows followed it screeching and cawing. Getting tired of this annoyance the kite let go the fish, when it was instantly caught by another kite and at once the crowd of kites and crows transferred their kind attentions to the new owner of the fish. The first kite was left unmolested and sat calmly on the branch of a tree. Seeing this quiet and tranquil state of the bird, the *Avadhuta* saluting him, said: "Thou art my *Guru,* O Kite, for thou hast taught me that so long as man does not throw off the burden of the world-

ly desires he carries, he cannot at all be undisturbed and at peace with himself."

522. It is said that when a *Tantrika* tries to invoke the Deity through the medium of the spirit of the dead, he sits over a fresh human corpse and keeps near him food and wine. During the invocation, if at any time the corpse is vivified (though temporarily) and opens its mouth, the intrepid invoker must 'pour wine and food into its gaping mouth at the time to appease the elemental that has, for the time being, taken possession of the dead body. If he does not do so, the invocation is interrupted by this elemental and the higher spirit does not descend. So, dwelling in the bosom of the carcase of the world, if thou wantest to attain beatitude, thou must first provide thyself beforehand with everything necessary to pacify the clamour of all worldly demands on thee, otherwise, thy devotion will be broken and interrupted by worldly cares and anxieties.

523. The alligator loves to swim on the surface of the water, but as soon as he rises up he is made a mark of by the hunters. Necessarily, he is obliged to remain under water and cannot rise to the surface. Still, whenever he finds an opportunity, he rises up with a deep whizzing noise and swims happily on the wide watery expanse. O man, entangled in the meshes of the world. Thou too art anxious to swim on the surface of the ocean of Bliss, but art prevented from doing so by the importunate demands of thy family. But be of good cheer, and whenever thou findest any leisure call intensely upon thy God, pray to him earnestly, and tell Him all thy sorrows. In His proper time He will surely emancipate thee and enable thee to swim merrily on the surface of the ocean of Divine Bliss.

524. The maid-servant says with reference to her master's house: "This is our house." All the while she knows that the house is not her own, and that her own house is far away in a distant village of Burdwan or Nadia. Her thoughts are all sent forth to her village home. Again, referring to her master's child in her arms, she says: "My Hari (that being the name of the child) has grown very naughty," or, "My Hari likes to eat this or that," and so on. But all the while she knows for certain that Hari is not her own. I tell those who

come to me to lead a life unattached like this maid-servant. I tell them to live unattached to this world—to be in the world, but not of the world—and at the same time to have their mind directed to God, the heavenly home from whence all come. I tell them to pray for *bhakti.*

525. A learned Brahmin once went to a wise king and said: "Hear, O king! I am well-versed in the Holy Scriptures. I intend to teach thee the holy book, the *Bhagavatam.*" The king, who was the wiser of the two, well knew that a man who had really studied the *Bhagavatam* would seek more to know his own Self than honour and wealth in a king's court. He replied: "I see, O Brahmin, that you yourself have not mastered that book thoroughly. I promise to make you my tutor, but go first and learn the Scripture well." The Brahmin went on his way thinking within himself: "How foolish the king is to say I have not mastered the *Bhagavatam* well, when I have been reading the book over and over for all these years." However, he went over the book carefully once more and appeared before the king. The king told him the same thing again and sent him away. The Brahmin was sore vexed, but thought that there must be some meaning for this behaviour of the king. He went home, shut himself up in his closet and applied himself more than ever to the study of the book. By an by the hidden meanings began to flash before his intellect; the vanity of running after the bubbles, riches and honour, kings and courts, wealth and fame, all vanished before his unclouded vision. From that day forward he gave himself up entirely to attain perfection by the worship of God and never returned to the king. A few years after, the king thought of the Brahmin and went to his house to see what he was about. Seeing the Brahmin all radiant with the Divine light and love, he fell upon his knees and said: "I see that thou hast now arrived at the true meaning of the Scriptures. I am ready to be thy disciple if thou wilt duly condescend to make ma one".

526. A Jnani (knower of God) and a Premika (lover of God) were once passing through a forest. On the way they saw a tiger at a distance. The Jnani said: "There is no reason why we should flee; the Almighty God will certainly protect us." At this the Premika said: "No, brother, come,

let us run away. Why should we trouble the Lord for what can be accomplished by our own exertions?"

527. In the month of June a young goat was playing near his mother, when with a merry frisk he told her that he meant to make a feast of *Ras*-flowers, a species of flowers budding abundantly during the time of the Rasalila festival. "Well, my darling," replied the dam, "it is not such an easy thing as you seem to think. You will have to pass through many crisis before you can hope to feast on *Ras*-flowers. The interval between the coming September and October is not very auspicious to you; for some one may take you for a sacrifice to the Goddess Durga, then you will have to get through the time of Kali-puja, and if you are fortunate enough to escape through that period, there comes the Jagaddhatri-puja, when almost all the surviving male members of our tribe are destroyed. If your good luck leads you safe and sound through all these crises then you can hope to make a feast of *Ras*-flowers in the beginning of November." Like the dam in the fable, we should not hastily approve of all the aspirations which our youthful hopes may entertain by remembering the manifold crisis which we shall have to pass through in course of our lives.

528. Four blind men went to see an elephant. One touched the leg of the elephant and said: "The elephant is like a pillar." The second touched the trunk and said: "The elephant is like a thick club." The third touched the belly and said: "The elephant is like a big jar." The fourth touched the ears and said: "The elephant is like a big winnowing basket." Thus they began to dispute among themselves as to the figure of the elephant. A passer-by seeing them thus quarrelling said: "What is it that you are disputing about?" They told him everything and asked him to arbitrate. The man said: None of you has seen the elephant. The elephant is not like a pillar, its legs are like pillars. It is not like a big water-vessel, its belly is like a big water-vessel. It is not like a winnowing basket, its ears are like winnowing baskets. It is not like a stout club, but its proboscis is like that. The elephant is the combination of all these." In the same manner those who quarrel have seen only one aspect of the Deity.

529. Be not like Ghantakarna in thy bigotry. There was

a man who worshipped Siva but hated all other Deities. One day Siva appeared to him and said: "I shall never be pleased with thee so long as thou hatest the other gods." But the man was inexorable. After a few days Siva again appeared to him and said: "I shall never be pleased with thee so long as thou hatest." The man kept silent. After a few days Siva again appeared to him. This time he appeared as Harihar, namely, one side of his body was that of Siva, and the other side that of Vishnu. The man was half pleased and half displeased. He laid his offerings on the side representing Siva, and did not offer anything to the side representing Vishnu. Then Siva said: "Thy bigotry is unconquerable. I, by assuming this dual aspect, tried to convince thee that all gods and goddesses are but various aspects of one Absolute Brahman."

530. Once a dispute arose in the court of the Maharaja of Burdwan among the learned men there as to who was the greater Deity—Siva or Vishnu. Some gave preference to Siva, others to Vishnu. When the dispute grew hot a wise Pandit remarked, addressing the Raja: "Sire, I have neither met Siva nor seen Vishnu; how can I say who is the greater of the two?" At this the dispute stopped, for none of the disputants really had seen the Deity. Similarly, none should compare one Deity with another. When a man has really seen a Deity, he comes to know that all the Deities are manifestations of one and the same Brahman.

531. Many roads lead to Calcutta. A certain man started from his home in a distant village towards the metropolis. He asked a man on the road: "What road must I take to reach Calcutta soon?" The man said: "Follow this road." Proceeding some distance, he met another man and asked him: "Is this the shortest road to Calcutta?" The man replied: "O, no! You must retrace your footsteps and take the road to your left?" The man did so. Going in that new road for some distance, he met a third man, who pointed him out another road to Calcutta. Thus the traveller made no progress, but spent the day in changing one road for another. As he wanted to reach Calcutta, he should have stuck to the road pointed out to him by the first man. Similarly, those who want to reach God must follow one and only guide (*Guru*).

532. A Brahmin was laying within a garden. He looked

after it day and night. One day a cow straying into the garden browsed away carefully watched trees by the Brahmin. The Brahmin, seeing the cow destroy his favourite plant, became wild with rage and gave such a sound beating to the animal that she died of the injuries received. The news soon spread like wild fire that the Brahmin had killed the sacred animal. The Brahmin was a so-called Vedantist and when taxed with the sin, denied it, saying: "No, I have not killed the cow; it is my hand that has done it; and as Indra is the presiding deity of the hand, if any one has incurred the guilt of killing the cow, it is Indra, and not I".

Indra in his heaven heard all this, assumed the shape of an old Brahmin, came to the owner of the garden, and said: "Sir, whose garden is this?"

Brahmin: "Mine."

Indra: "It is a beautiful garden. You have got a skilful gardener, for see how neatly and artistically he has planted the trees!"

Brahmin: "Well, Sir, that is also my work. The trees were planted under my personal supervision and direction."

Indra: "Indeed! O, you are very clever. But who has laid out this road? It is very ably planned and neatly executed."

Brahmin: "All this has been done by me".

Then Indra with joined hands said: "When all these things are yours and you take credit for all the works done in this garden, it is hard lines for poor Indra to be responsible for the killing of the cow."

533. A thief entered the palace of a king at the dead of night and overheard the king saying to the queen: "I shall give my daughter to one of those *Sadhus* (holy saints) who are dwelling on the banks of the river." The thief thought within himself: "Well, here is luck for me. I will go and sit among the *Sadhus* tomorrow in the disguise of a *Sadhu* and perchance I may succeed in getting the king's daughter. "The next day he did so, and when the king's officers came soliciting the *Sadhus* to marry the king's daughter, none of them consented; at last they came to this thief in the dress of a *Sadhu* and made the same proposal to him. The thief kept quiet. The officers went back and told the king that there was a young *Sadhu*

who might be influenced to marry the princess, and that there was no other who would consent. The king was obliged to go in person to the *Sadhu* and entreat him earnestly to honour him by accepting the hand of his daughter. But the heart of the thief was changed by the king going to him. He thought within himself: "I have assumed the dress of the *Sadhu* and behold the king himself come to me with entreaties and prayers. Who can say what better things may not be in store for me if I become a real *Sadhu !*" These thoughts so strongly affected him that instead of marrying under false pretences, he began to mend his ways from that very day and exerted himself to become a true *Sadhu.* He did not marry at all and ultimately became one of the most holy saints of his day. The imitation of a good thing sometimes produces genuine results.

When a thief dressed in the garb of a *Sadhu* could be transformed into a man of saintly character by associating with the holy ones for so short a time, who can describe the wonderful power of the true saints and of their holy company!

534. A person deeply involved in debts, feigned madness to escape the consequences of his liabilities. Physicians failed to cure the disease ; and the more he was treated for his ailment, the greater became his madness. At last a wise physician found out the truth and taking the feigning mad man aside, rebuked him, saying: "Sir, what are you doing? Beware, lest in feigning madness, you become really mad. Already I see some genuine signs of insanity in you." This home-thrust advice awoke the man from his folly and he left off acting the part of a mad man. By constantly acting a thing one ultimately becomes that thing.

535. The parable of a Brahmin and his low-caste servant:

As soon as *maya* is found out, she flies away. A priest was once going to the village of a disciple. He had no servant with him. On the way, seeing a cobbler, he addressed him saying: "Hallo! good man, wilt thou accompany me as a servant? Thou shalt dine well and wilt be well cared for ; come along." The cobbler replied: "Reverend Sir, I am of the lowest caste ; how can I represent your servant?" The priest said: "Never mind that. Do not tell anybody what thou art, nor speak to or make acquaintance with any one." The cobbler agreed. At twilight, while the priest was sitting at prayers in the house of his dis-

ciple, another Brahmin came and addressed the priest's servant: "Fellow, go and bring my shoes from there." The servant, true to the words of his master, made no response. The Brahmin repeated the order a second time, but the servant remained silent. The Brahmin repeated it again and again, but the cobbler moved not an inch. At last getting annoyed, the Brahmin angrily said: Hallo, Sirrah! How darest thou not obey a Brahmin's command! What is thy caste? Art thou a cobbler?" The cobbler, hearing this, began to tremble with fear, and piteously looking at the priest, said: "O venerable Sir! O venerable Sir? I am found out. I cannot stay here any longer; let me flee." So saying, he took to his heels.

536. Haridasa wearing the mask of a tiger's head was frightening a young boy. The mother said to the frightened child: "Why fearest thou, my dear child? He is no other than our Hari. He has put on a paper mask." But the boy still continued to cry out at the top of his voice. After a while Hari took the mask off his face and consoled him by putting it in his hands; the boy then understood the whole trick and was no longer frightened by it. Even such is the case of the worldly that are deluded and frightened by the inscrutable power of *maya,* under whose mask resides the ever-blissful Brahman. But he who has gone beyond the veil of *maya* is never disturbed by fear or troubles.

537. Two persons, it is said, began together invoking the Goddess Kali by the terrible process called the *shava-sadhana.* (This *Tantrika* invocation is performed in a funeral yard, the invoker sitting on the body of a corpse in a dark night). One invoker was frightened to insanity by the horrors of the earlier portion of the night; the other was favoured with the vision of the Divine Mother at the end of the night. Then he asked Her: "Mother! why did the other man become mad?" The Goddess answered: "Thou, too, O child! didst become mad many times in thy previous births and now at last thou seest me."

538. A man who was out of employment was constantly bothered by his wife to get some employment. One day his son was dangerously ill so he went out in search of employment. In the meantime his son died and a search was made for the father, but he could not be found anywhere. At last, late in

the evening he was seen returning and was severely taken to task for his heartless conduct in leaving the house at a time when his son lay dying. The man replied: "Well, once I dreamt that I had seven sons with whom I passed the time happily. But when I woke up I found that it was all a dream. Well, I never grieved for my dream of seven sons. Why should I be grieved for this?"

539. Do not give charity indiscriminately; for alms giving to some persons causes sin instead of merit. A person had a charitable institution for giving food to every wayfarer who asked for it. A butcher tired of driving a cow to a slaughter-house, went to the institution, and being invigorated with fresh food and drink, easily drove the cow to the shambles. The sin of killing the cow was divided between the butcher and the author of the insitution, in the proportion of four annas and twelve annas.

540. A snake dwelt in a certain place. No one dared to pass by that way; for whoever did so was instantaneously bitten to death. Once a *Mahatman* (high-souled one) passed by that road, and the serpent ran after the sage in order to bite him. But when the snake approached the holy man he lost all his ferocity and was overpowered by the gentleness of the Yogin. Seeing the snake, the sage said: "Well, friend, thinkest thou to bite me?" The snake was abashed and made no reply. At this the sage said: "Hearken, friend; do not injure anybody in future." The snake bowed and nodded assent. The sage went his own way, and the snake entered his hole, and thence-forward began to live a life of innocence and purity without even attempting to harm anyone. In a few days all the neighbourhood began to think that the snake had lost all his venom and was no more dangerous, and so everyone began to tease him. Some pelted him; others dragged him mercilessly by the tail, and in this way there was no end to his troubles. Fortunately the sage again passed by that way, and seeing the bruised and battered condition of the good snake, was very much moved, and inquired the cause of his distress. At this the snake replied: "Holy Sir, this is because I do not injure any one after your advice. But alas! they are so merciless!" The sage smilingly said: "My dear friend, I simply advised you not to bite anyone, but did not tell you not to frighten

others. Although you should not bite any creature, still you should keep everybody at a considerable distance by hissing at him".

541. A fisherwoman on her way home from a distant market was overtaken by a storm at nightfall, so she was compelled to take refuge in a florist's house near at hand. The hospitable florist received her very kindly and allowed her to spend the night in a room next to his garden. But the fragrant atmosphere of the place was too good for the fisherwoman. She could not sleep for a long time. At last when she discovered that the sweet aroma of the flowers in the garden kept her awake, she sprinkled water on her empty basket of fish, placed it close to her nose, and immediately fell into a sound sleep. Such indeed is the power and influence of bad habits over all those who are addicted to them. They cannot enjoy the uplifting influence of the spiritual atmosphere.

542. A rich Marwari merchant asked the Bhagavan: "Lord, I have renounced everything; why then do I not find God?" To him the Bhagavan replied. "Your mind is like the leather jar of oil from which, though all the oil has been removed, the scent of the oil still remains. So, though your mind has renounced the world, the scent of worldly desires still clings to you."

543. A disciple once asked the Bhagavan how to conquer lust, for, though he passed his life in religious contemplation, yet evil thoughts did arise in his mind now and then. The Bhagavan replied: There was a man who had a pet dog. He would caress him, carry him about on his lap, play with him, and kiss him. A wise man, seeing the folly, told him not to give so much indulgence to his dog. It was an unreasoning brute after all and might bite him one of these days. The owner of the dog took the advice to heart and, throwing away the dog from his lap, resolved never again to fondle and caress him. But the dog could not understand the changed feelings of his master and would run to him frequently to be taken up and careseed. Being beaten several times, the dog at last desisted from troubling his master. Such is your condition also. The dog of lust that you have nourished so long in your bosom will not easily leave you though you may wish to leave him. However, there is no harm in it; though the dog may come

to you to be fondled, do not caress him, but give him a good beating whenever he approaches you, and in course of time you will be freed from his importunities.

544. A husband and wife renounced the world and jointly undertook a pilgrimage to various religious shrines. Once, as they were walking on a road, the husband, being a little ahead of the wife, saw a piece of diamond on the road. Immediately he scratched the ground to hide the diamond, thinking that, if his wife saw it, she might perchance be moved by avarice and thus lose the merit of her renunciation. While he was thus busy, the wife came up and asked him what he was doing. In an apologetic tone he gave her an evasive reply. She noticed the diamond, however, and reading his thoughts, asked him: "Why have you left the world, if you still feel the difference between the diamond and the dust?"

545. A poor Brahmin had a rich cloth merchant as his disciple. The merchant was one of the most miserly of men. One day the Brahmin stood in need of a small piece of cloth to serve as a covering for his sacred book. Going to his disciple, he asked for a small piece of cloth. The merchant replied: "I am very sorry, Sir, had you told me of this a few hours earlier I would have given you the thing wanted. Unfortunately I have now no small piece of cloth available for your purposes; however, I will keep your wish in mind. Remind me now and then of it, if you so please." The Brahmin went away disappointed. The conversation between the *Guru* and his worthy disciple was overheard by the wife of the latter from behind a screen. She at once sent a man after the Brahmin and, calling him inside the house, asked him: "Reverend father, what was it that you were asking from the master of the house?" The Brahmin related all that had happened. The wife said: "Please go home, Sir; you will get the cloth tomorrow morning." When the merchant returned home at night, the wife asked him: "Have you closed the shop?" The merchant said: "Yes, what is the matter?" She said: "Go at once and bring two of the best cloths of the shop." He said: "Where is the hurry? I will give you the very best cloths tomorrow morning." The wife said: "No, I must have them just now or not at all." What could the merchant do? It was not the spiritual *Guru* whom he could send away with vague and indefinite promises,

but it was the curtain *Guru*, whose behests must be instantaneously obeyed or there would be no peace for him at home at all. At last the merchant went back to the shop at that late hour of the night, opened the shop, and brought them for her. Early the next morning the good lady of the house sent the cloths to the *Guru* with this message: "If in future you want anything from us, ask of me and you will get it". Therefore, those who pray to the merciful Divine Mother and ask for Her blessings have better chances of having their prayers heard than those who worship God in His sterner paternal aspect.

546. *Q.* Why do you not lead a family life with your wife?

A. The god Kartikeya, the leader of the Heavenly army, once happened to scratch a cat with his nail. On going home he saw there was the mark of a scratch on the cheek of his mother. Seeing this, he asked her: "Mother, dear, how have you got that ugly scratch on your cheek ?" The goddess Durga replied: "Child, this is thy own handiwork—the mark scratched by thy own nail." Kartikeya asked in wonder: "Mother, how is it? I never remember to have scratched thee!" The mother replied: "Darling, hast thou forgotten having scratched a cat this morning?" Kartikeya said: "Yes, I did scratch a cat; but how did your cheek get marked?" The Mother replied: "Dear child, nothing exists in this world but myself. I am all creation. Whomsoever thou hurtest, thou hurtest me." Kartikeya was greatly surprised at this, and determined never to marry. For whom would he marry ? Every woman was mother to him. I am like Kartikeya. I consider every woman as my Divine Mother.

547. A Brahmin met a Sannyasin and they had a long talk on worldly and religious topics. At last the Sannyasin addressed the Brahmin: "Behold, child, there is no depending upon anybody in this world." The Brahmin would not believe it. How could he believe that those for whom he laboured day and night, that is, his own family, were not his friends upon whom he could count for help? So the Brahmin said: "Sir, when I am troubled with a slight headache, my mother, who is always ready to give up her life in order to save me from danger and to make me comfortable and happy, becomes extremely concerned; that such a mother is not a friend is

what I cannot conceive." The Sannyasin replied: "If such be the case, then of course they are your own. But, to tell you the truth, you are greatly mistaken. Never believe for a moment that your mother, wife, or son will sacrifice her or his life for your sake. You can make a trial of it if you like; go home and feign excruciating pain and groan under it; I will come and show you the fun".

The Brahmin acted accordingly. Doctors and physicians were called in, but no one could afford relief. The mother of the patient was sighing and sorrowing, the wife and children were crying. The Sannyasin turned up at this moment.

"The disease is of a serious nature," said the Sannyasin, and I do not see any chance of the patient's recovery, unless some one comes forward to give her or his life for the sake of the patient." At this all of them looked aghast. The Sannyasin, addressing the old mother of the patient, said: "To live or to die will be the same thing to you, if in your old age you lose your son who earns for himself and for you all. If you can give your life in exchange for his, I can save your son. If you, as mother, cannot make this sacrifice for him, who else in this world will care to do it?"

The old woman blubbered through her tears: "Reverend father, I am ready to do anything you order for the sake of my son. But the thing is, my own life—and what is my life in comparison to that of my son? The thought—what will become of my little ones after my death—makes me a coward. Unfortunate that I am, these little ones are in my way."

While listening to this dialogue between the Sannyasin and the mother-in-law, the wife of the patient wept bitterly and said, addressing her parents: "For your sake, dear mother and father, I cannot make the sacrifice." The Sannyasin turned to her and asked her whether she could not sacrifice her life for the sake of her husband now that his mother fell back. The wife said: "The wretch that I am! If widowhood is to be my lot, be it so. I cannot make up my mind to entail grief for the loss of their child upon my father and mother." In this way every one wriggled out of the difficulty. Then the Sannyasin addressed the patient and said: "Look now, no one is ready here to sacrifice life for you. Do you understand now what I meant by saying that there was no depending on

anybody here?" When the Brahmin saw all this, he abandoned his socalled home and followed the Sannyasin.

548. He who is fond of fishing and wishes to be informed of good fish abound in a certain pond, quickly goes to those persons who have fished in it, and eagerly asks them: "Is it true that there are big fish in this pond? If so, what is the bait to catch them?" Having collected all this information, he resorts to the pond with his fishing rod, waits there, throwing his line, and allures the fish with patience and dexterity, and at last succeeds in hooking a large and beautiful dweller of the deep. So, putting implicit trust in the sayings of holy saints and sages, one must try to catch and confine God in his bosom with the bait of devotion and the rod and hook of mind. With patience one must wait, and then only can one catch the Divine Fish.

549. A king having committed the mortal crime of killing a Brahmin, went to the hermitage of a sage to learn what penance he must perform in order to be purified. The sage was absent from home, but his son was there. The son hearing the case of the king, said: "Repeat the name of God (Rama) three times and your sin will be expiated". When the sage came back and heard the penance prescribed by his son, he said to him in great wrath: "Sins comitted in myriads of births are purged at once by but once uttering the name of the Almighty; how weak must be thy faith, O son, that thou hast ordered that name to be repeated thrice! For this offence of thine go and become a Chandala." And the son became Guhaka Chandala of the *Ramayana*.

550. Once upon a time conceit entered the heart of the sage, Narada, and he thought that there was no greater devotee than himself, Reading his heart, the Lord Sri Vishnu said: "Narada, go to such and such a place, there is a great Bhakta of mine there, and cultivate his acquaintance." Narada went there and found an agriculturist, who rose early in the morning, pronounced the name of Hari only once, and taking his plough went out to till the ground all day long. At night he went to bed after pronouncing the name of Hari once more. Narada said within himself: "How can this rustic be called a lover of God? I see him busily engaged in worldly duties, and he has no signs of a pious man in him". Narada then went

back to the Lord and said all that he thought of his new acquaintance. The Lord said: "Narada, take this cup full of oil, go round this city and come back with it, but beware lest a drop of it fall to the ground". Narada did as he was told, and on his return he was asked: "Well, Narada, how often did you remember me in your walk?" "Not once, my Lord", replied Narada, "and how could I when I had to watch this cup brimming over with oil?" The Lord then said: "This one cup of oil did so divert your attention that even you did forget me altogether, but look to that rustic who, carrying the heavy load of a family, still remembers me twice every day".

551. A tame mungoose had its home high up on the wall of a house. One end of a rope was tied to its neck, while the other end was fastened to a weight. The mungoose with the appendage runs and plays in the parlour or in the yard of the house, but no sooner does it get frightened than it at once runs up and hides itself in its home on the wall. But it cannot stay there long, as the weight at the other end of the rope draws it down, and it is constrained to leave its home. Similarly, a man has his home high up at the feet of the Almighty. Whenever he is frightened by adversity and misfortune he goes up to his God, his true home; but in a short time he is constrained to come down into the world by its irresistible attractions.

552. A rich man puts his Sircar (a superintending clerk) in charge of his garden. When visitors look in, the Sircar is all attention to them. He takes them through the different parts of the garden and the house attached to it, saying: "These, gentlemen, are our mango tree. These are our *lichi, golapjam,* etc. Here, you see, is our drawing-room. Over there are our oil-paintings and other pictures, so splendid, etc.

Now, suppose the Sircar is caught by his master fishing against his order in the garden lake. Do you know how he is dealt with? Why, he is ordered peremptorily to leave the garden. And it was, bear in mind, the very same man who was so warmly talking of *'our this'* and *'our that'*.

The *'mine'* or *'our'* of the Sircar comes of *ajnana* (ignorance of truth).

553. The calf bellows *hamma* or *aham* (*I*). Now look at the troubles caused by this, its *ahamkara,* which says *'I', 'I'*. In the first place, when grown up it is yoked to the plough. It works

from dawn to eve alike in sun and rain. It may be killed by the butcher. Its flesh is eaten. Its skin is tanned into hide and made into shoes. The drums are also made with it, which are mercilessly beaten sometimes with the hand and at others with the drumstick. It is only when out of its entrails are made strings for the bows used for carding cotton that the troubles of the poor creature are over. And that is because it no longer says *hamma (I), hamma (I)*, but *tuhum, tuhum* (it is Thou, it is Thou).

The moral is that *mukti* (freedom) is within the reach of him alone who has learnt the lesson of complete self-abnegation, perfect forgetfulness of self.

It also teaches that unless the vital parts (entails of the calf) are struck, *aham* (*I*-ness) can hardly be got rid of. One scarcely says *"tuhum"* (Thou) until one is cut to the quick, that is, loses riches, sons, and the like. Even when struck by such severe blows, the *"thou*ness" may or may not come to replace the *"I*ness".

554. Greed brings woe, while contentment is all happiness. A barber was once passing under a haunted tree when he heard a voice say: "Wilt thou accept of seven jars of gold ?" The barber looked round, but could see no one. The mysterious voice again repeated the words, and the cupidity of the barber being greatly roused by the spontaneous offer of such wealth, he spoke aloud: "When the merciful God is so good as to take pity even on a poor barber like me, is there anything to be said as to my accepting the kind offer so generously made ?" At once the reply came: "Go home, I have already carried the jars thither". The barber ran in hot haste to his house and was transported to see the promised jars there. He opened them one after another and saw them all filled, save one which was half filled. Now arose in the heart of the barber the desire of filling this last jar. So, he sold all his gold and silver ornaments and converted them into coins and threw them into the jar. But the jar still remained empty. He now began to starve himself and his family by living upon insufficient, coarse, and cheap food, throwing all his savings into the jar, but the jar remained as empty as ever. The barber then requested the King to increase his pay as it was not sufficient to maintain him and his family. As he was a favourite of the king, the latter granted

his request. The barber now began to save all his pay and emoluments and throw them all into the jar, but the greedy jar showed no sign of being filled. He now began to live by begging, and became as wretched and miserable as possible. One day the king, seeing his sad plight, inquired of him by saying: "Hallo! when thy pay was half of what thou gettest now, thou wast far happier and more cheerful, contented, and healthy; but with double that pay I see thee moorse, care-worn, and dejected. Now what is the matter with thee? Hast thou accepted the seven jars of gold?" The barber was taken aback by this home-thrust, and with clasped hands asked the king as to who had informed his majesty about the matter. The king answered: "Whoseover accepts the riches of a Yaksha is sure to be reduced to such an abject and wretched plight. I have known thee through this invariable sign. Do away with the money at once. Thou canst not spend a farthing of it. That money is for hoarding and not for spending". The barber was brought to his senses by this advice and went to the haunted tree and said: "O Yaksha, take back thy gold", and he returned home to find the seven jars vanished, taking with them his life-long savings. Nevertheless he began to live happily thereafter.

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VIVEKANANDA AND HIS WORK

PREFACE

In accordance with the resolution passed by the Vedanta Society of New York at the Memorial Services held last October (1902) in honour of the Blessed Swami Vivekananda, the second Sunday of March (8th March, 1903) was devoted to a public recognition of the great work that had been accomplished by him in America and in Europe as well as in India. It had been desired to have a number of well-known speakers to pay tribute to his memory, but as many of the Swamiji's closest friends had passed away since his last visit to America, still others were too distant from New York to be present. The original plan of a public memorial meeting was modified and the present lecture was delivered by Swami Abhedananda who had the rare privilege of sitting together at the blessed feet of their wonderful Master, Sri Ramakrishna and preaching His mission in the foreign lands, in the Carnegie Lyceum, New York, before a large and sympathetic audience. This memorable and appreciative lecture was first published in a book-form in India in 1924.

This little but illuminative pen-picture of Swami Vivekananda has a merit of its own as it came out from one of his dearest and worthiest spiritual brothers. It is rather a sincere appreciation of Swami Vivekananda and his works in America and in Europe by his beloved brother Swami Abhedananda who spent nearly twentyfour years in the West in preaching the divine message of Vedanta and the loftiest teachings of his beloved Master, Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Before commencing his memorable lecture on Swami Vivekananda and his works, Swami Abhedananda said: "The subject of this afternoon (8th March, 1903) is of one who needs neither introduction from any of his countrymen, nor commendation from any of his humble co-workers and fellow-disciples of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, whose seventieth birthday anniversary was celebrated last Sunday by the Vedanta Society of New York and whose wonderful romantic life we have heard in this hall (Carnegie Lyceum Hall)". Really this maiden speech was the first appreciation of homage to the Great Swami Viveka-

nanda by his colleague in the foreign land after he (Swamiji) had left his mortal coil. This lecture (or the book) undoubtedly proves a deep love and regard of Swami Abhedananda to his revered beloved brother, Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Abhedananda says that Swami Vivekananda had no caste and had no earthly parents, but he was the child of Sri Ramakrishna. He renounced everything, severed his family relations and was born again of his spiritual father. It was his blessed Master who by the magic of his divine touch brought into play the latent greatness of his soul. Being the most worthy disciple of his Master, he followed the footsteps of Sri Ramakrishna, holding in his heart that he was the lowest of the low, lower even than a Pariah, so far as caste distinction and social position were concerned. Man-making was the ideal of the revered Swami. With a heart weeping at the sight of the suffering and degradation of the illiterate mass of India, with a soul glowing with the fire of disinterested love for humanity and true patriotism, Swami Vivekananda solved the problems concerning the future of his holy Motherland by holding before the nation's eyes the ideal of character-building through the light and spirit of Vedanta. "Before I close, I must tell you that I had the honour of living with this great Swami in India, in England and in this country (America). I lived and travelled with this great spiritual brother of mine, saw him day after day and night after night and watched his character for nearly twenty years, and I stand here (in America) to assure you that I have not found another like him in these three continents, and that no one can take the place of this wonderful personage. As a man, his character was pure and spotless; as a philosopher, he was the greatest of all Eastern and Western philosophers. In him I found the ideal of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga; he was like the living example of Vedanta in all its different branches". In conclusion of this lecture, Swami Abhedananda says: "Vivekananda is not dead, he is with us, now and for ever. He is the senior brother to the whole world".

Three new matters have been added, the first of which is the miscellaneous notes taken by Swami Abhedananda himself from the discourses, given by Swami Vivekananda under the 'Pine' at Greenacre during July and August, 1894; the second

of which is the translation from the Sanskrit of aphorisms given by Swami Vivekananda under the 'Swami's Pine' at Greenacre, July 27, 1894, and the third is the 'Song of the Sannyasins' which was incorporated by Swami Abhedananda himself in the first edition of the book. It is needless to state that though the book, *Vivekananda and His Work* is a small one, yet it is filled with the living inspiration and love for Swami Vivekananda by his beloved spiritual brother, Swami Abhedananda.

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

CHAPTER I

VIVEKANANDA AND HIS WORK

The subject of the present lecture is one who made himself famous in this country as a great spiritual hero before he was hardly known to the public in India, the land of his birth. From Canada to Texas, from California to New York, there is no state in this vast American Commonwealth where the name of our illustrious hero is not remembered with profound respect, and where the charm and spiritual strength of his forceful utterances are not felt by the educated and thoughtful minds of its citizens. During the last decade there had been few pulpits in the United States which have not held preachers who have had something to say either for or against the teachings of the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu Sannyasin monk, who belonged to the order of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. For the first time in the annals of modern India and also in the religious history of America, it has been recorded that a wise man of the East, unaided by government, uninvited and unsupported by any religious organization, crossing the unfathomable waters of the deep that separates India from her antipodes, could carry the message of peace and harmony into the heart of religious strife and rivalry of sectarian doctrines and creeds that were exhibited in the Parliament of Religions, held at the World's Fair Congress in Chicago in 1893.

The message of truth requires neither the protection of the sword nor the support of gunpowder for its propagation. The preachers of truth are very few, but their powers are felt by those who happen to come within the atmosphere of their divine personality. Such a preacher of truth occasionally appears like a gigantic comet above the horizon, dazzling the eyes and filling the hearts of ordinary mortals with wonder and admiration, and silently passes away into the invisible and unknown realm of the universe. The late Swami Vivekananda was one of those great comets who appeared in the spiritual firmament once perhaps after several centuries. A well-known

writer of this city wrote the other day: "The passing of Swami Vivekananda was like the flashing of a mighty star upon our wondering eyes. For, in truth, no greater, wiser, truer, holier soul has ever dwelt among us than this marvellous man who has recently gone into spirit life."

Those who have met him and heard him speak, will remember his fascinating personality, his fine intelligent face beaming with celestial radiance mingled with the innocent smile of a child, his deep musical voice, his uncommon eloquence and above all, his wonderful oratorical powers which drew from the hearts of his appreciative listeners the exclamation that he was an 'orator by divine right.'

That memorable address which placed the philosophy and religion of Vedanta on a level with the highest philosophical, spiritual, and religious ideals of the world's celebrities who assembled in the Parliament of Religions, was the first attempt of our great Swami to deliver before the world the message of his blessed Master which he had been carrying in his soul for nearly twelve years before he appeared in public. During that period he had travelled over India from place to place on foot, like a Hindu Sannyasin monk, living up to the vows which he had taken in his youth, of poverty, purity, chastity and unselfishness and setting a living example of a *jivanmukta*—one who is emancipated from the fetters of the world.

We must not forget that before his appearance in the Parliament of Religions as a speaker, he did not know himself that he could speak in public, yet those who have read his World's Fair Addresses, I am sure, have realized the logical force, the intellectual strength and the spiritual depth, of which every sentence bears testimony. That opening address made Swami Vivekananda the most popular of all the delegates and representatives of different religions who gathered at that gigantic Fair; and he was invited to speak before the meetings of the scientific and other sections of the Congress. Here allow me to read what the President of the Scientific section, Mr. Merwin Marie Snell, wrote about the glorious success achieved by this humble young Sannyasin who represented the religion and philosophy of India:

"... And by far the most important and typical representative of Hinduism was Swami Vivekananda, who, in fact, was

beyond question, the most popular and influential man in the Parliament. He frequently spoke, both on the floor of the Parliament itself and at the meetings of the scientific section, over which I had the honour to preside, and on all occasions he was received with greater enthusiasm than any other speaker, Christian or 'Pagan'. The people thronged about him wherever he went and hung with eagerness on his every word. Since the Parliament he has been lecturing before large audiences in the principal cities of the United States and has received an ovation wherever he has gone. He has often been invited to preach on Christian pulpits and has, by all those who have heard him on any occasion and still more by those who have made his personal acquaintance always been spoken of in terms of the highest admiration. The most rigid orthodox Christians say of him: 'He is, indeed, a prince among men'. America thanks India for sending him and begs her to send many more like him, if such there are, to teach by their example those of her own children who have not yet learned the lesson of universal fraternity and openness of mind and heart and by their precepts those who have not come to see the Divinity in all things and an oneness transcending all".

After the Congress was over, the popular Swami was invited in almost all of the large cities of the Eastern and middle Western States to give addresses before public clubs, societies and universities. Before he came to New York he visited Boston and Cambridge and delivered public addresses and class lectures, expounding the philosophy and religion of Vedanta, which were highly appreciated by the educated men and intelligent women of the New England States.

When he lectured before the Philosophical Society of the Harvard University, his address produced such a profound impression upon the minds of the professors that they offered him a chair of Eastern philosophy in that university; but being a Sannyasin, he could not accept this offer. A Sannyasin never sells his wisdom for name, position or material return. This address was afterwards published and the late Rev. C. C. Everett, D.D., LL.D., of Harvard University, wrote the preface, in which he introduced to America the Vedanta philosophy and its most worthy representative, Swami Vivekananda. The

words of Mr. Everett will give you an idea of the impression which Swami Vivekananda made upon his mind:

"The Swami Vivekananda was sent by his friends and co-religionists to present their belief at the Congress of Religions that was held in connection with the World's Fair in Chicago. This he did in a way to win general interest and admiration. Since then he has lectured on the same theme in different parts of our country. He has been in fact a missionary from India to America. Everywhere he has made warm personal friends and his expositions of Hindu philosophy have been listened to with delight. It is very pleasant to observe the eager interest with which his own people in India follow his course, and the joy that they take in his success. I have seen a pamphlet, filled with speeches made at a large and influential meeting in Calcutta,[1] which was called together to express enthusiastic approval of the manner in which he has fulfilled his mission and satisfaction at this invasion of the West by Oriental thought. This satisfaction is well-grounded. We may not be so near to actual conversion as some of these speakers seem to believe; but Vivekananda has created a high degree of interest in himself and his work. There are, indeed, few departments of study more attractive than the Hindu thought. It is a rare pleasure to see a form of belief that to most seems so far away and unreal as the Vedanta system, represented by an actually living and extremely intelligent believer. This system is not to be regarded merely as a curiosity, as a speculative vagary. Hegel said that Spinozaism is the necessary beginning of all philosophizing. This can be said even more emphatically of the Vedanta system. We occidentals busy ourselves with the manifold. We can, however, have no understanding of the manifold, if we have no sense of the One in which the manifold exists. The reality of the One is the truth which the East may well teach us; and we owe a debt of gratitude to Vivekananda that he has taught this lesson so effectively."

In 1894 the Swami Vivekananda came to New York to

[1] The Report of a public meeting held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 5th September, 1894 A.D., presided over by Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee. It was organised by Swami Abhedananda. In recognition of the hard labour made by him in organizing the meeting Swami Vivekananda wrote from America.

deliver his message before the public. He spoke in public halls in the city on different subjects, held classes, instructing earnest and sincere students in the various branches of the science of Yoga and the philosophy of Vedanta, and eventually succeeded in laying the foundation of the Vedanta Society, which is now in a most flourishing condition. Most of his public addresses and class lectures have been published in pamphlets or book forms by the Vedanta Society. The *Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, The Ideal of a Universal Religion, My Master,* are the principal works of the Swami.

I have met many people in this country during my six years stay who regard Raja Yoga in the same light as the most devout Christian regards his own Scriptures. It has been a revelation to many agnostic and sceptical minds; it has transformed the characters of many. Every passage of this wonderful book is charged, as it were, with the soul-stirring spiritual power generated by the gigantic battery of the pure soul of our great Yogi. This wonderful book, which has been translated into several languages and published in three different countries, has commanded respect among the intelligent, educated classes and the sincere seekers of truth in the three continents—America, Europe and Asia.

During his three years stay in America, Swami Vivekananda was most hospitably received and kindly entertained by his admirers, students and disciples. Invitations came from various quarters, and he accepted them all. Sometimes he would be invited by people living in different cities hundreds of miles apart to give public addresses on the same day and he would accept in every case, travelling for hours by train or by any available conveyance.

Thus working day after day for three long years, Swami Vivekananda had to fight against many obstacles; sometimes he would have summer clothes in winter, and he would go through unimaginable hardships regarding food and clothes, facing the sudden changes and severities of the American climate; sometimes he would deny himself to help others, caring nothing for his personal comforts; while at other times he would depend entirely upon the spontaneous sympathy and voluntary help of his hosts and hostesses. In the midst of all these disadvantages our indefatigable hero did not fail to sow

the seed of the sublime truths of the Vedanta philosophy in the hearts of hundreds and thousands of American citizens. No one except those who have heard the Swami describe his own experiences in this Christian country can realize what tremendous struggles he had to make to push his way against the volleys of unfair and unjust remarks and spiteful criticisms which were fired at him by the orthodox Christians, foreign missionaries, the Theosophists and their worthy adherents.

These storms of opposition instead of quenching the fire of the spiritual truth of Vedanta that was burning upon the altar of the God-inspired soul of this Hindu preacher, fanned it into a blaze of light, the glory of which was visible from shore to shore, nay, from across the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. By his marvellous presence of mind, indomitable courage, and stainless purity of character, he succeeded in overcoming the obstacles that stood in the path of his success and fought his battle well, like a brave soldier, being guided and directed by the command of his divine Master, through whose power and grace he conquered and subdued his opponents.

Swami Vivekananda's success was due to his unbounded faith in the words of his spiritual Master, who is now regarded, honoured, revered, respected and worshipped in India and other countries as an Incarnation of Divinity. The great Master, seeing future grandeur and greatness of the soul of Swami Vivekananda, inspired him several times in the presence of his other disciples by saying: "Thou hast a great work to perform; thy mission in life is to spread the truth of the universal religion."

Thus having established in America the glory of his Master Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, through his own success and reputation, and having shown to the world by his unselfish work his disinterested love for humanity, and having opened the spiritual eyes of hundreds of admirers, followers, students, friends, and disciples, Swami Vivekananda obeyed his Master's call and carried his message to England in 1896. There he first made the acquaintance of the venerable Prof. Max Muller, accepted his invitation and visited him at his home in Oxford. By his magnetic personality the Swami inspired in him the desire to publish the life and sayings of his blessed Master. He

then delivered his message to the public, and created a profound impression upon the minds of the spiritually inclined men and women and of the advanced thinkers of England. These lectures were printed at first in England and were afterwards published by the Vedanta Society of New York under the title of 'Jnana Yoga'. The present speaker was an eyewitness to the effect which were produced upon the majority of his vast audience. For the first time their eyes were opened to the grandeur of the philosophy as also to the universality of the religion of Vedanta. I shall never forget the grand farewell address that was given to him by his enthusiastic English friends on the thirteenth of December, 1896, in a public meeting at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours in Piccadilly, London.

Having finished his work in England and having given the charge of his classes to the present speaker, Swami Vivekananda sailed for India on the sixteenth of December with a handful of English disciples who were so devoted to him that they would not leave his company.

The news of his return to India was announced in all parts of the country. The Hindus of all castes and creeds who had heard of his success in the West as the greatest exponent of the philosophy and religion of the Motherland, were eagerly waiting to show their appreciation of his great work, and to pay homage to the victorious soldier of God in the form of Swami Vivekananda.

On the fifteenth of January, 1897, the North German Lloyd Steamer, *'Printz Regent Luitpold'*, which carried on board our illustrious hero, reached the harbour of Colombo in Ceylon. A large crowd of people and admirers gathered near the landing-place to receive the great Swami Vivekananda. At the entrance to the city of Colombo triumphal arches had been erected and the streets were decorated with continuous festoons of greens and garlands of flowers. The Swami drove in a carriage along the decorated streets through cheering crowds to a bunglow where the official reception was held and the following sympathetic address of welcome was read.

"In pursuance of a resolution passed at a public meeting of the Hindus of the City of Colombo, we beg to offer you a hearty welcome to this Island. We deem it a privilege to be

the first to welcome you on your return home from your great mission in the West.

"We have watched with joy and thankfulness the success with which the mission has, under God's blessing, been crowned. You have proclaimed to the nations of Europe and America the Hindu ideal of a universal religion, harmonizing all creeds, providing spiritual food for each soul according to its needs, and lovingly drawing it unto God. You have preached the Truth and the way taught from remote ages by a succession of Masters whose blessed feet have walked and sanctified the soil of India, and whose gracious presence and inspiration have made her through all her vicissitudes the Light of the world.

"To the inspiration of such a Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Dev, and to your self-sacrificing zeal, Western nations owe the priceless boon of being placed in living contact with the spiritual genius of India, while to many of our own countrymen, delivered from the glamour of Western civilization, the value of our glorious heritage has been brought home.

"By your noble work and example you have laid humanity under an obligation difficult to repay, and you have shed fresh lustre upon our Motherland. We pray that the grace of God may continue to prosper you and your work, and

We remain, Revered Sir,
Yours faithfully,
The Hindus of Colombo."

In reply, the Swami delivered the most eloquent address, showing his appreciation and expressing his gratitude for the kindness and sympathy shown him for the humble service that he had done in the Western countries for the cause of India.

Invitations from different quarters began to pour in and he accepted as many of them as his short stay in the Island of Ceylon allowed. Having received the respect, honour and loving sympathy of the inhabitants of that great island the Swami sailed for India. Near the southernmost point there is a small town called Pamban where he landed. His Highness the Raja of Ramnad went in person to meet the great Swami and greet him with a most cordial welcome. A formal address of welcome

was read and Swami Vivekananda's reply was heard with great interest by hundreds of people who crowded round him. After this reception he was invited by His Highness to be his guest of honour in his palace. He accepted the invitation and was seated in the carriage when, at the instance of His Highness, the horses were removed and the carriage was drawn by the Raja himself aided by his devoted attendants. It will be interesting to you to know that this Raja, desiring to commemorate the first spot where the Swami landed, erected there a monument, the inscription on which reads thus:

"*Satyameva Jayati.* This monument erected by Bhaskara Sethupathy, the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's feet first trod on Indian soil together with the English disciples of His Holiness, returned from the Western Hemisphere where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness's philanthropic labours to spread the religion of the Vedanta."

All the Hindus of all castes came to see the Swami and treated him with the greatest respect, kindness and hospitality. After staying there for three days as the guest of honour of His Highness, the Swami proceeded north towards Calcutta, the place of his birth, a distance of about four thousand miles—as far as San Francisco is from New York—stopping on his way in the principal cities of the different states and presidencies. Everywhere he was most cordially received and entertained. In fact, the receptions and ovations given to Swami Vivekananda were unique in the annals of the history of India. No prince, no Maharaja, nor even the Viceroy of India, has ever received such a hearty welcome and such spontaneous expressions of love, reverence, gratitude and respect as were showered upon the blessed head of this great patriot-saint of modern India. Time will not permit me to describe the great ovations and receptions which were bestowed upon him in Madras and Calcutta, the capital of the vast British Empire in Asia.[1] Those who have read the book named *From Colombo to Almora* will remember

[1] Calcutta remained capital of the British Government in India till December 1911. Then the capital had been removed to Delhi. After the end of British domination in 1947 the national Government of Indian Union also have retained Delhi as their capital.

what national pathos, enthusiasm and spiritual zeal were aroused in the hearts of the people by the return of the most worthy disciple of the blessed Lord Sri Ramakrishna, our Master and spiritual guide.

India, indeed, knows how to honour a spiritual hero. As Europe and America know how to honour their political or their military heroes when they return from the battlefield with their faces smeared with the lifeblood of their innocent victims, so India, on the contrary, is the only country in the world where a spiritual hero receives similar honour when he returns from the spiritual battlefield after gaining victories of peace and love over inharmony and sectarian fight. The interest of the Hindu lies in religion. The Hindus do not care so much for politics or commercialism as for religion. Even the most illiterate Indian peasant knew what Swami Vivekananda was doing here and he was eagerly waiting to hear the reports of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and to greet the hero who had achieved glorious success in expounding the religion of Vedanta.

Now let us see in what the Swami's mind was affected by these grand ovations. We all know how few people can digest the honours bestowed upon them by a whole nation. We have witnessed how the minds of Hobson and Dewey were turned when eulogies were poured upon their heads by the American nation. But with Swami Vivekananda the effect was different. After receiving the highest honours from three great nations, Swami Vivekananda's mind was neither elated with pride or self-conceit, nor was his head turned for half a second from the blessed feet of his beloved Master. With the same childlike simplicity, with the same humility of character, which he had possessed before he came to America, and keeping the same fire of renunciation alive in his soul he realized the transitoriness of all the triumphal honours which were showered upon him.

He dressed himself once more in rags, took up his begging bowl and staff and began to wander like an ordinary Sannyasin from place to place. But this sudden change produced a great shock in his whole system and completely broke down his health. He would not listen to the advice and good counsels of his friends. Even in this state of health Swami Vivekananda showed that his spirit was infinitely greater than his physical

form, and that his body was no longer capable of holding the soul which was constantly expanding and reaching out to the Infinite by transcending all limitations.

On account of his poor health, he was obliged to give up the platform work for the time being. He wanted to take rest, but the indefatigable energy which was poured into his soul by some unseen hand would not allow him to take rest. It pushed him from inside to do more work. From this time, however, he succeeded in directing that tremendous force in another channel. With the help of his American and English friends, he established two great monasteries for training the students of Vedanta of all castes, creeds and nationalities,—one about six miles north of Calcutta and the other in the Himalayas, over six thousand feet above the sea-level. These two monasteries are for the training of the Brahmacharins. In the second there are at present some English and American students who have gone there to study the religion and philosophy of Vedanta.

During the time of the terrible plague and famine in 1897, Swami Vivekananda also started the Ramakrishna Mission work with the help of his fellow disciples and co-workers, and established relief stations in different parts of the country to help the poor and suffering people and to distribute food, clothes, medicines. They have been doing splendid work in the way of relieving the distress of the sufferers. At the same time he opened three orphan asylums with educational schools in Bengal, Rajputana and in the Punjab. The two magazines in English,—the *Brahmavadin* and the *Awakened India* and also a monthly journal in Bengali (*Udbodhana*) were started through the help of this great Swami.

But the mental strain was too much for his poor health; he needed rest. At the request of his American and English friends, he re-visited America in 1899 to have a complete change and to be away for a season from the field of his work. The doctors and physicians of New York advised him to spend the winter in California, so he went to California and within a few months recovered his strength and again took up the platform work. He gave addresses and courses of lectures in San Francisco and Los Angeles, established the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, which is now in a very flourshing condition under

the leadership of Swami Trigunatita[1] who has recently come from India.

At that time the Swami's worthy disciple, an Irish lady known as Sister Nivedita,[2] who has renounced her family and voluntarily taken up the life of poverty, chastity and unselfishness, visited New York and gave courses of lectures describing the educational needs of Hindu women and the Swami's plans for establishing something like University Settlement work in Calcutta.

Swami Vivekananda came to New York and stayed in the Vedanta house for nearly three months, where he delivered lectures and conducted classes. Then he went to see the Paris Exhibition where he was invited to speak. Thus paying his last visit to his American and English friends, students and disciples, the Swami returned to India.

At this time, he began to feel that he had finished his public work and had delivered before the world the message which had been entrusted to him by his blessed Master. His health became poorer every day, but the inexhaustible energy and power that were working through his form would not let him remain quiet. He turned that force now in another direction—in training the disciples and moulding the character of those gathered around him, by his living example as well as by his soul-stirring spiritual instructions. Silently ignoring the world-wide fame that had shone upon his name, he lived unostentatiously in the quiet house of the monastery on the bank of the Ganges, sometimes playing the part of a *Guru* or spiritual teacher, sometimes that of a father, sometimes even of a school-master. Man-making was now the ideal of our revered Swami. With a heart weeping at the sight of the suffering and degradation of the illiterate masses of India, with a soul glowing with the fire of disinterested love for humanity and true patriotism, Swami Vivekananda solved the problems concerning the future of his Motherland by holding of character-building through the light and spirit of Vedanta.

He told his disciples to live up to the mark of the teaching

[1] Swami Trigunatita died at San Francisco in 1915 after a glorious preaching career for nearly twelve years.

[2] Sister Nivedita died at Darjeeling in 1911 A.D.

of Vedanta, as that was what the world needed. He gave his lessons and instructions and day after day he set himself to build the characters of his disciples and followers for the regeneration of India, until the fourth of July 1902, when he liberated his soul from the bondage of the mortal frame and like a great Yogi he threw away the garment of his physical body by entering into *samadhi* or the state of super-consciousness, from which he never returned. Thus he fulfilled to the very letter the prediction of his blessed Master: "That when his mission would be finished he would realize his divine nature and would give up his body."

Swami Vivekananda did not die of any disease like an ordinary mortal; for during two months before his departure he was in perfect health and even on the last day he walked two miles and gave lessons to his disciples for nearly two hours in the afternoon and in the evening before dinner he told the disciple who attended on him to wait outside until he was called for. In the meantime he went into super-consciousness through the path of meditation. He foretold several times that his work was finished and that he was passing away. The great soul thus passed away when his fame as a great Yogi, as a spiritual teacher, a religious leader, a patriot saint, as a writer and an orator and above all, as the most disinterested worker for humanity had reached its climax and when new calls for greater work were ringing in his ears. As a lover of freedom, he could not have chosen a more auspicious day than the fourth of July, when the atmosphere around our planet was reverberating with the thoughts of freedom that were arising from the free souls of the American nation.

The loss of Swami Vivekananda has been a national calamity for India and has been felt with profound sorrow by his admirers, followers and friends all over the world. Memorial services were held in all parts of India and Ceylon, in New York and California and in other States of America. No country has ever produced such a many-sided character harmoniously combined in one form as we have seen in the late Swami Vivekananda.

Was he the same graduate of the Calcutta University, the son of a lawyer and attorney of the High Court of Calcutta? No, he was different. Swami Vivekananda was different from

him who was known as Narendra Nath Dutta before he came to his blessed Master.

Did he belong to any caste? No, Swami Vivekananda had no caste; he had no earthly parents, but he was the child of Ramakrishna. He renounced everything, severed his family relations and was born again of his spiritual father. He never claimed for himself any caste distinction. It was his blessed Master who by the magic of his divine touch brought into play the latent greatness of his soul. Being the most worthy disciple of his Master, he followed the footsteps of Sri Ramakrishna, holding in his heart that he was the lowest of the low, lower even than a Pariah, so far as caste distinction and social position were concerned. He lived an unmarried life as simple and pure as that of a child: always regarding women as the representatives of the Divine Mother. Poverty, self-abnegation, self-renunciation and disinterested love for humanity were the ornaments of this exemplary character.

Today Swami Vivekananda has become the great ideal of the Hindu nation. The narrow-minded sectarians may not acknowledge it, but the fault is not to be found with the sun because the owls do not see its glorious rising. In the name of Swami Vivekananda, the whole of India is weeping with profound sympathy and sorrow; he is regarded as the patriot-saint of modern India. Hundreds of societies, clubs, schools and colleges have been started in the name of Swami Vivekananda by the respectable Hindus of all castes and creeds to show their appreciation of his greatness and to carry on his work for the cause of India. The other day I received a letter from a friend from Colombo in Ceylon who said:

"In Ceylon I see there is an English Magazine published under the name of 'Vivekananda.' A public hall has been erected here and named 'Vivekananda Hall.' A society has been started under the name of the Vivekananda Society. At Conjeeveram, in Southern India, there is a medal in a college named 'Vivekananda Medal.' In Trichinopoly there is a Vivekananda College. In Calcutta the University graduates have started a Vivekananda Society. In almost every city in India there is a Vivekananda society or club; the object of these societies is to continue the work left by this glorious patriot-saint and to fulfil his desires and ideas."

I have just received a letter from India saying that on the twenty-fifth of last January, 1903, the fortieth birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated in the monastery near Calcutta where his body was cremated, and three thousand people were sumptuously entertained and over five hundred from among the educated and respectable communities came to honour and show reverence to the holy spirit of the departed Swami.

Before I close, I must tell you that I had the honour of living with this great Swami in India, in England, and in this country (America). I lived and travelled with this great spiritual brother of mine, saw him day after day and night after night and watched his character for nearly twenty years, and I stand here to assure you that I have not found another like him in these three continents, and that no one can take the place of this wonderful personage. As a man, his character was pure and spotless; as a philosopher, he was the greatest of all Eastern and Western philosophers. In him I found the ideal of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga; he was like the living example of Vedanta in all its different branches.

In conclusion, allow me to read an open letter sent to me by the late President of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, Dr. M. H. Logan, M.D., A.M., Ph.G. He was a personal friend of Swami Vivekananda, as you will see from his letter. He says:

"Many are the moments of sadness since the Swamiji has gone away. It seems that all the gods had left us, for his Divine presence spread peace and tranquility wherever he went; the tumult of uncertainty departed from my soul at the sound of his magic voice. His very form and every mood were those of tender compassion and sympathy. None knew him but to love him; those of us who have had the royal good fortune to meet him in the flesh will some day realize that we have met the true Incarnation of the divine One.

"To me he is the Christ, than whom a greater one has never come; his great and liberal soul outshines all other things; his mighty spirit is as free and liberal as the great sun, or the air of heaven.

"No being lived so mean or low, be he a man or a beast,

that he would not salute. His was not only an appeal to the poor and lowly but to kings and princes and mighty rulers of the earth, to grand masters of learning, of finances, of arts and of sciences, to leaders of thought and of creeds, to mighty intellects, philosophers and poets. Vivekananda shook the world of thought in all its higher lines. Great teachers bowed reverently at his feet, the humble followed reverently to kiss the hem of his garments; no other single human being was revered more during his life than was Vivekananda.

"In the few short weeks that I was with him a few could know him better than I. At first I attended him through a severe spell of sickness, then he sat with me partly through a paralytic stroke; he would charm me to sleep and enchant me awake. So passed the sublimest part of my life, and now that sweet memory lingers and sustains me ever and always."

Many have asked me why so great and good a man must die? I have said, why should he not die? His task was finished: One ordinary human body was not enough, nor twenty, nor a hundred for such tremendous energy. Such an intense intellect and spirituality would soon dissolve the granite foundation stones.

Vivekananda is not dead, he is with us, now and for ever; He is my comfort and solace. He is the senior brother to the whole world.

CHAPTER II

(1)

SONG OF THE SANNYASIN

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach ;
In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
Could ever dare to break ; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth and bliss that follows both.
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore ;
Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng.
Know, slave is slave, caresed or whipped, not free.
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind ;
Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

Let darkness go : the will-o'-the-wisp that leads
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom,
This thirst for life, forever quench ; it drags
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this
And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

"Who sows must reap", they say, and "Cause must bring
The sure effect. Good, good ; bad, bad ; and none
Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
Must wear the chain." Too true ; but far beyond
Both name and form is *Atman*, ever free.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

They know no truth who dream such vacant dreams
As father, mother, children, wife and friend.
The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?
Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?
The Self is all in all, none else exists ;
And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
Om Tat Sat, Om !

There is but One—The Free—The Knower—Self!
Without a name, without a form, or stain.
In Him is Maya, dreaming all the dream.
The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world
Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament ;
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

Say, "Peace to all. From me no danger be
To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high,
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all
All life, both here and there, do I renounce,
All heavens, earths and hells, all hopes and fears".
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done, Let *Karma* float it down,
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame ; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser, praised and blamer, blamed, are one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om !

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of women
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.
So give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om!

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof; the grass thy bed; and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows itself. Like rolling river free
Thou, ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om!

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without
The fear or pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om!

Thus day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the All is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say,
Om Tat Sat, Om!

(2)

Miscellaneous notes taken by Swami Abhedananda from discourses given by Swami Vivekananda under the "Pine" at Greenacre during July and August, 1894.

Meditation is a sort of prayer and prayer is meditation. The highest meditation is to think of nothing. If you can remain one moment without thought, great power will come. The whole secret of knowledge is concentration.

Soul best develops itself by loving God with all the heart. Soul is the thinking principle in man, of which mind is a function. Soul is the conduit from spirit to mind.

All souls are playing, some consciously, some unconsciously. Religion is learning to play consciously.

Seek the highest, always the highest, for in the highest is eternal bliss. If I am to hunt, I will hunt the rhinoceros. If I am to rob, I will rob the treasury of the King. Seek the highest.

O, One that cannot be confind or described! One that can be perceived in our heart of hearts! One beyond all compare, beyond limit, unchangeable like the blue sky! O, learn the All Holy One! Seek for nothing else.

Where changes of nature cannot reach, thought beyond all thought, unchangeable, immovable; whom all books declare, all sages worship; O, Holy One! Seek for nothing else.

Beyond compare, Infinite Oneness! No comparison is possible. Water above, water below, water on the right, water on the left; no wave on that water, no ripple, all silence, all eternal bliss. Such will come to thy heart. Seek for nothing else.

If you know you are bound, you are bound. If you know you are free, you are free.

My soul was never bound by yearnings of this world, for like the eternal blue sky I am the essence of knowledge, of existence, and of bliss.

Why weepest thou, brother? Neither death, nor disease for thee. Why weepest thou, brother? Neither misery, nor misfortune for thee. Why weepest thou, brother? Neither change, nor death was predicated of thee. Thou art Existence

Absolute. I know what God is, I cannot speak of him to you. I know not how God is, how can I speak of Him to you? But seest thou not, my brother, that thou art He, thou art He. Why go seeking God here and there? Seek not, and that is God. Be your own self.

Thou art our Father, our Mother, our dear Friend. Thou bearest the burden of the world. Help us to bear the burden of our lives. Thou art our Friend, our Lover, our Husband, Thou art ourselves.

Four sorts of people worship me. Some want the delights of the physical world. Some want money. Some want religion. Some worship me because they love me. Real love is love for love's sake. I do not ask health or money or life or salvation. Send me to a thousand hells, but let me love Thee for love's sake.

Our present consciousness is only a little bit of an infinite sea of mind. Do not be limited to this consciousness.

There are three great things to be desired to develop the soul. First, human birth. Second, thirst for the highest. Third, to find one who has reached the highest, a Mahatma, one whose mind, word, and deed are full of the nectar of virtue, whose only pleasure is in doing good to the universe, who looks upon others' virtues, be they only as a mustard seed, even as though they were a mountain ; thus expanding his own self and helping others to expand. Thus goes the Mahatma.

The word 'Yoga' is the root of which our word 'yoke' is a derivative, meaning 'to join,' and, therefore, Yoga means joining ourselves with God, joining me with my real self.

All actions now involuntary or automatic were once voluntary, and our first step is to gain a knowledge of the automatic actions, the real idea being to revivify and make voluntary all automatic actions, to bring them into consciousness. Many Yogis can control the action of their hearts. To go back into consciousness and bring out things we have forgotten is ordinary power, but this can be heightened. All knowledge, all that is, can be brought out of the inner consciousness, and to do this is *yoga*. The majority of actions and thoughts are automatic or acting behind consciousness. The seat of automatic action is in the *medulla oblongata* and down the spinal cord.

The question is, how to find our way back to our inner consciousness. We have come out through spirit, soul, mind, and body, and now must go back from body to spirit, First, get hold of the air, then the nervous system, then the mind, then the *Atman* or spirit, but in this effort we must be perfectly sincere in desiring the highest.

The law of laws is concentration. First, concentrate all nerve energies and all power lodged in the cells of the body into one force and direct it at will. Then, bring the mind, which is thinner matter, into one center. The mind has layer after layer. When the nerve force concentrated is made to pass through the spinal column, one layer of the mind is open. When it is concentrated in one bone, another part of this world is open. So from world to world it goes until it touches the pineal gland in the center of the brain. This is the seat of conservation of potential energy, the source of both activity and passivity.

Start with the idea that we can finish all experience of this world in this incarnation. We must aim to become perfect in this life this very moment. Success only comes to that life amongst men who wants to do this very moment. It is acquired by him who says: "Faith, I wait upon faith, come what may." Therefore, go on knowing you are to finish this very moment. Struggle hard, and then, if you do not succeed, you are not to blame. Let world praise or blame you, let all the wealth of the earth come to your feet, or let you be made the poorest on earth, let death come this moment or hundreds of years hence, swerve not from the path you have taken. All good thoughts are immortal and go to make Buddhas and Christs.

Law is simply a means of expression, various phenomena brought into your mind. Law is your method of grasping material phenomena and bringing them into unity. All law is finding unity in variety. The only method of knowledge is concentration on the physical, mental, and spiritual planes, and concentrating the power of the mind to discover one in many is what is called knowledge. Everything that makes for unity is moral; everything that makes for diversity is immoral. Own the One without a second, that is perfection. The One who manifests in all is the basis of the universe, and all religion, all knowledge must come to this point.

(3)

Translation from the Sanskrit of Aphorisms given by Swami Vivekananda under the "Swami's Pine" at Greenacre, July 27, 1894.

I am neither body nor changes of the body;
Nor am I senses or object of the senses.
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute;
I am He, I am He.

(*Sivo'ham, Sivo'ham.*)

I am neither sin nor virtue; nor temple nor worship;
Nor pilgrimage nor books.
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute;
I am He, I am He.

(*Sivo'ham, Sivo'ham.*)

I have neither death nor fear of death;
Nor was I ever born, nor had I parents.
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute;
I am He, I am He.

(*Sivo'ham, Sivo'ham.*)

I am not misery, nor ever had I misery;
I am not enemy, nor had I enemies.
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute;
I am He, I am He.

(*Sivo'ham, Sivo'ham.*)

I am without form, without limit, beyond space, beyond time
I am in everything; I am the basis of the universe;
everywhere am I.
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute
I am He, I am He.

(*Sivo'ham, Sivo'ham.*)

(4)

THE FROG IN THE WELL

(Given by the Swami Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago)

A frog lived in a well. It had lived there a long time. It was born there and also brought up there, and yet was a little, small frog. Of course, the evolutionists were not there then to tell us whether the frog had lost its eyes or not, but for our story's sake we must take it for granted that it had its eyes, and that it every day cleansed the water of all the worms and bacilli that lived in it with an energy that would give credit to our modern bacteriologists. In this way it went on and became a little, slick, fat frog—perhaps as much as myself. Well, one day another frog that lived in the sea came and fell into the well.

"Whence are you from?"

"I am from the sea."

"The sea? How big is that? Is it as big as my well?" and he took a leap from one side of the well to the other.

"My friend," says the frog of the sea, "how do you compare the sea with your little well?"

Then the frog took another leap and asked. "Is your sea so big?"

"What nonsense you speak to compare the sea with your well!"

"Well, then," said the frog of the well, "nothing can be bigger than my well; there can be nothing bigger than this; this fellow is a liar, so turn him out."

That has been the difficulty all the while. I am a Hindu. I am sitting in my own little well and thinking that the world is my well. The Christian sits in his well, and the whole world is his well. The Mohammedan sits in his well, and thinks the whole world that.

I have to thank you of America for the great attempt you are making to break down the barriers of this little world of ours, and hope that in future the Lord will help you to accomplish that purpose.

(This piece was selected by Swami Abhedananda himself for inclusion in this book).