

Mystics Magazine

Hindu Mystical Theology

Conversations with Sri Ramakrishna

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org



Krishna

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Mystics Magazine

Hindu Mystical Theology
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 By Marilyn Hughes

Mystics Magazine ventures to take on the issues of Mystical Theology in Different Faiths and World Religions in a new and unique way. It is the purpose of each issue of the magazine to embrace the personal dialogue and teachings of a great Master of the Mystical Path within that religion and allow them to speak of their personal experience and conclusions based on their years of inquiry into the supersensual world.

We've utilized many texts which involve actual dialogue between the Great Mystics and others wherein they explain important aspects and understanding of the mystical theology (and sometimes moral theology) of their own unique religious path.

The Author does not necessarily agree with all views presented, but wishes to present the similarities and differences between some of the Great Mystics the world over. In doing so, we can see better where we agree and where we disagree. We can also pick up points from other paths that may enhance our own.

Look upon this journey into Mystics Magazine as an opportunity to discern for yourself as to how these things may be able to help you in your own spiritual journey.

This is an opportunity to have a conversation with some of the greatest mystical minds in history. So consider listening in . . .

The Gospel of Ramakrishna

Edited by Swami Abhedananda, 1907

CHAPTER II

SRÎ RÂMAKRISHNA WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE TEMPLE

THE Bhagavân 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 Swâmi Vivekânanda. 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 Bhagavân 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 us all. The Bhagavân laughed and said: No, my friend, do not go so far as that. You should love everyone; no one is a stranger; God dwells in all beings; without Him nothing can exist. When Prahlâda realized Him, the Lord asked him to crave a boon. Prahlâda replied: "When I have seen Thee, 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." Prahlâda 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 (Mâhoot) 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 (Mâhoot)? Tell me why you did not pay heed to the warning of the driver?

God in everything. The Bhagavân 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: What attitude should we hold when wicked people come to disturb our peace or do actually offend us?

Bhagavân: A person living in society should have a little Tamas (the spirit of resisting evil) Resistance of for purposes of self-protection. But evil 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 (Mahâtmâ) 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 neighborhood concluded that the snake had lost his venom and was no longer dangerous; so everyone

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 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 creature, still you should keep people at a distance by hissing at them." And Srî Râmakrishna 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.

Râmakrishna: 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. Râmakrishna: 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. Company of the wicked. Wicked people may say many things about you and blame you; but if you long for God, you should endure with patience.

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 relative, 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 unawares. 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 Nârada 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 *Baddha*, 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 lawsuit, but they will again go to the courts. They may not be able to support their 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 odor, 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 Chunder 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 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, to deceive or to 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 spiritual subjects. Even at the hour of death he will think and talk of worldly things. Whatever thought is strongest in the minds of worldly people comes out at the time of death. If they become delirious, they rave 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 may repeat the Holy Name of the Lord, but when attacked by death, the natural tendency of their minds will predominate. What thou thinkest thou shalt become. It is said in the Bhagavad Gitâ that the future is determined by the thought that is uppermost at the moment of death, and in the Purâna there is a story that King Bharata was born as a deer because when he died, his mind was fixed on the thought of a deer. 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, but who does not meditate on Him at the time of death, be born again?

Concentration and meditation

Srî Râmakrishna: 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 on so much because they have no faith and in God. In order to be able to think meditation. 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?

Râmakrishna: If by the Grace of the Lord strong dispassion for worldly things arises in his mind, then such a person becomes free from

Dispassion. All earthly attachment. What is this *strong* dispassion? Let me tell you. 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 digging that he lost account of time. The hour for luncheon came and passed. His wife called him to come home, wash and eat. "The luncheon is getting cold. Leave your work until tomorrow," she urged. At first he paid no heed to her

words, but when she repeated her request, he bade her go home and not disturb him anymore. "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 toward 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 fill my pipe," and he washed, ate a hearty dinner and enjoyed a sound sleep. This kind of determination 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 a farmer cannot 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. A householder may then live with his family, but he becomes unattached and there is no more danger 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 Him the attraction of the world is small and powerless.

A devotee: Bhagavan, why are we so bound to the world that we cannot see God?

Send of "I"

Râmakrishna: 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," instantly that man becomes emancipated in this life. This sense of "I" 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 is dispersed by the mercy of a Guru, or spiritual master, the glory of Infinite becomes visible. When Râma, the Divine Incarnation in a human form, was walking in the forest, Lakshmana (the individual soul), who was at a short distance, could not see Him because Sitâ or Mâyâ, 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 Mâyâ 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 nature. He who dresses smartly will naturally sing love-songs, play cards and carry a cane, and such things will appeal to him. If you have a pencil in your hand, you will unconsciously scribble on anything; such is the power of the pencil. Money has great power. When a man becomes wealthy his nature is entirely changed. He is a different being. A poor Brâhmin, 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 had a Rupee in its hole. An elephant was coming that way and passed over the hole. The toad was very angry; it came out and was about to kick 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 (Samâdhi) and eventually to God-consciousness. But it is very difficult to acquire this Divine wisdom. It is said in the Vedas that when the mind reaches the seventh stage of the spiritual evolution, the soul enters into Samâdhi and instantly its sense of "I" disappears. The mind naturally dwells in the first three stages, the realm of worldly tendencies and animal propensities,

and 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 and speak of God. When the mind rises still higher, near the space between the eyebrows, 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, cannot become one with it. In the seventh stage, however, the mind is bereft of the sense of "I," enters into God-consciousness 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?

Râmakrishna: It cannot be described by words. In the seventh stage when the mind goes into its causal form, Samâdhi comes and what happens then no one can tell.

This sense of "I" which makes one worldly Difference between soul and God 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 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."The worldly "I" says: "Doesn't he know that he stole ten Rupees which belonged to me? How dared he?"

Devotee: Bhagavan, if we cannot get rid of worldliness except by losing the sense of "I" in Samâdhi, is it not better to follow the path of wisdom which leads to Samâdhi, since in the path of devotion the sense of "I" still remains?

Difficult to be rid of "I."

Râmakrishna: Very few can get rid of the sense of "I" through Samâdhi. 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 to-day, but to-morrow 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!" Servant "I" of a Bhakta.Think in this way: "I am His servant, I am His Bhakta, 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 the repetition of His Holy Name with extreme longing, God can be reached without fail.

Devotee: Bhagavan, dost Thou teach us to renounce the worldly "I" and not the sense of the servant "I"?

Râmakrishna: Yes, the servant "I" or "I am the servant of God," "I am His devotee," this 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?

Râmakrishna: 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 it cannot cut or injure anyone. The dry leaves of the cocoanut-tree drop off in the wind, leaving a mark on the trunk; that mark proves that there was a leaf there 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.

A child's "I."

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. 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 Samâdhi or God-consciousness, 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, to love and serve Him. Again, those who constantly practise this sense of "servant I" 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; 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

Prahlâda 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. Râmakrishna: God can be realized by the purified heart alone. Ordinarily the mind is stained with worldliness. God is like a magnet. 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. Power of repentance. 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.

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 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 as the "doer" 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 to God-vision. He is the sun of wisdom. God, 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 Illustration of a bull's-eye lantern.own face, then He becomes visible to His Bhakta or devotee. In the night the watchman goes from place to place holding in his hand the bull's-eye lantern. By its light he sees everyone's face and people see each other, but no one can see him. If any one 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 VII

SOME INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF SRÎ RÂMAKRISHNA (AS TOLD BY HIMSELF)

i

Days of struggle. 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 of 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." As the answer to this prayer came Mathura Bâbu, † who served me so long and with such intense devotion and faith! 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 pitre Bhakta, who will stay with me all the time. Send me such an one." Then came Râkhâl (Brahmânanda).

Those who are my own are parts of my very Self.

ii

Visit to Zoological Garden. In referring to the time of joyous illumination which immediately followed His enlightenment, He 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 Samâdhi. 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 Samâdhi.

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 Sitâ appeared before me! I forgot the existence of the harlot, but saw before me pure and spotless Sitâ, approaching Râma, 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 Bâbu, the son-in-law of Râshmoni, invited me to stay in his house for a few days. At that time I felt so strongly that I was the maid-servant of my Divine Mother that I thought of myself as a woman. 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 consciousness of sex.

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.

Visit to a poor Brahmin. Once I heard of a poor Brâhmin who was a true devotee and who lived in a small hut in Bâghbâzâr. I desired to see him, so I asked Mathura Bâbu to take me to him. He consented, immediately ordered a large carriage and drove me there. The Brâhmin'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 carriage!

At another time I wished to meet Devendra Nâth Tâgore. He is a very rich man, but in visit to Devendra Nath. Tâgore said despite of his enormous wealth he is devoted to God and repeats His Holy Name. For this reason I desired to know him. I spoke about him to Mathura Bâbu. He replied: "Very well, Bâbâ, I will take Thee to him; he was my classmate." So he took me and introduced me to him, saying: "This holy man 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 Bâbu: "Tell me, does pride spring from true wisdom or from ignorance? He who has attained to the highest knowledge of 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 Nâth Tâgore, 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. A doctor was present. I said: "When you have so much spiritual knowledge, how can you live constantly in the midst of so much worldliness? You are like Râjâ 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 Nâth Tâgore begged me to come to the anniversary of the Brâhmo-Samâj. I answered: "If it be the will of the Lord. I go wherever He takes me."

iv

Visit to Padmalochana. Padmalochana was the most eminent scholar in the court of the Râjâ of Burdwan. He came to a garden-house near Dakshineswara, and as I had a desire to meet him, I sent Hridai to find out whether he had pride or not. I learned that he was simple and absolutely free from scholarly pride, so I went to see him. He was indeed a great scholar and a true Jnâni. He defeated all the great pandits and theologians. He said that when he was in the court of the Râjâ a theological discussion arose regarding the Hindu Trinity,—whether the first person of the Trinity, Brahmâ, was greater than the third person of the Trinity, Shiva. The pandits referred to him for the final decision and Padmalochana replied: "I have seen neither Brahmâ nor Shiva; 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 found so much happiness anywhere." He revered me although I used to cry for my Divine Mother like a child.

v

Distaste for Worldly conversation. 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 Bâbu to Benares, 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. I have come to the Holy City to hear only of lust and gold; but there in the Temple I did not have to listen to such conversation."

I was at this time like a young boy and so Mathura Bâbu 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 Brâhmin in the neighborhood 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 Brâhmin 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 Brâhmin 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 earthly cage. The priest does not know that the form of a devotee is a spiritual form full of Divine intelligence." This Brâhmin once asked me why I had thrown away my Brâhminical 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 Brâhmin himself caught the madness of 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."

vi

Absolute frankness. 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, the purest and 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 of Yudhisthira'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 Râjâ, and I told him plainly that I could not call him Râjâ because he was not really one.

One day I saw a pious Brâhmin 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 Râshmoni, the founder of the Temple, was praying in the Temple while I was singing the holy song of the Divine Mother. I perceived that her mind was on worldly objects and instantly I roused her in the same manner. In amazement she folded her hands and remained motionless before me.

vii

Visit to Keshab Sen. Keshab Chunder Sen was suffering from a serious illness. Bhagavân Srî Râmakrishna 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 Bhagavân looked at it for a moment; then His mind turned within and He went into Samâdhi. After recovering sense-consciousness, He spoke thus:

Body and Âtman. There are two, the physical body and the Âtman; the body is born, so it must die, but Âtman 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 Âtman remains attached to the body; but in true knowledge the Âtman appears as separate from the body.

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 Bhagavân Srî Râmakrishna. The Bhagavân 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. Râmakrishna held Keshab's hand and said:

Perfect knowledge brings realization of oneness. So 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.

First you will have to realize unity by discrimination: "Not this, not this." Then after reaching this state of realization, when you come down to phenomena, you will discover that Unity and variety. 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 way from one place to another becomes straight across the water.

Keshab was listening with rapt attention. Although the room was crowded, absolute silence prevailed. The Bhagavân, looking at Keshab, then asked:

Meaning of Keshab's illness. 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 waters of the Ganges, I have seen the waves dash against the shore for 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 to 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 Re 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 Bhagavân continued: Hridai used to say, after seeing the condition of my body: "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.

Then shedding tears of sympathy for Keshab, the Bhagavân said: It is His will. Everything happens by Thy will O Lord! Thou doest Thy Everything the will of God works; by mistake people say, "I do." The gardener sometimes uncovers the of roots 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. But I feel very unhappy when you are ill. 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 Bhagavân, saying: "May Keshab be cured of his illness?"

The Bhagavân 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 said: Do Thou bless my Keshab.

Râmakrishna: 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 make him live."

Keshab then began to cough and could not remain longer, so he bowed down before the Bhagavân, saluted Him, and with great difficulty walked out of the room. Keshab's eldest son was there. A Brâhmo devotee said: Bhagavan, lay Thy hand on his head and bless him.

Râmakrishna replied: It is not for me to bless anyone.

He then gently touched him on his arm and said to the Brâhmo devotee: 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.

Srî Râmakrishna then rose to leave. Keshab's disciples accompanied Him to the door with great reverence, and He passed from the house with His disciples.

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