

# Vedanta

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The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna: A History  
*Swami Chetanananda*

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Arati and Self-Renewal  
*Swami Sunirmalananda*

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## Divine Wisdom

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*BRAHMO: "But what about our worldly duties-duties associated with our earning money, and so on?"*

*MASTER: "Yes, you can perform them too, but only as much as you need for your livelihood. At the same time, you must pray to God in solitude, with tears in your eyes, that you may be able to perform those duties in an unselfish manner. You should say to Him: 'O God, make my worldly duties fewer and fewer; otherwise, O Lord, I find that I forget Thee when I am involved in too many activities. I may think I am doing unselfish work, but it turns out to be selfish.' People who carry to excess the giving of alms, or the distributing of food among the poor, fall victims to the desire of acquiring name and fame.*

*"Sambhu Mallick once talked about establishing hospitals, dispensaries, and schools, making roads, digging public reservoirs, and so forth. I said to him: 'Don't go out of your way to look for such works. Undertake only those works that present themselves to you and are of pressing necessity-and those also in a spirit of detachment.' It is not good to become involved in many activities. That makes one forget God. Coming to the Kalighat temple, some, perhaps, spend their whole time in giving alms to the poor. They have no time to see the Mother in the inner shrine! (Laughter) First of all manage somehow to see the image of the Divine Mother, even by pushing through the crowd. Then you may or may not give alms, as you wish. You may give to the poor to your heart's content, if you feel that way. Work is only a means to the realization of God. Therefore I said to Sambhu, 'Suppose God appears before you; then will you ask Him to build hospitals and dispensaries for you?' (Laughter) A lover of God never says that. He will rather say: 'O Lord, give me a place at Thy Lotus Feet. Keep me always in*

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## Is Buddha relevant for us? (continued)

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**B**uddhism is rational and practical . Buddha did not encourage people asking irrelevant and unprofitable questions .His main teaching seems to be ,“Be good and do good ” “Lead a life which would confer peace joy and harmony . Do not waste precious time in futile talk ”

Buddha’s teaching led to some misunderstanding about some points .

### 1 Buddha did not believe in the existence of God

The truth is Buddha did not encourage talk about God .He neither denied nor affirmed God ,he simply kept mum on questions about God .Buddha observed that most of the people talking their heads off about God have no intention of either loving or realising Him; they merely love to talk .From Buddha’s point of view this is idle talk ,a waste of time .Buddha always pointed out that the goal of life is the realization of the only reality which he called *Nirvana*.

### 2 Nirvana is a state of nothingness †total annihilation

This is not correct .*Nirvana* is neither a state of total annihilation nor emptiness (*śhunyata* ) *Nirvana* is indescribable , inexpressible .No creature ever desires annihilation ,much less strives to attain it .Every living being hopes to live and to be happy .

Buddha says of *Nirvana* :“I attained in experience the *Nirvana* which is unborn ,unrivalled ,secure from attachment , undecaying and unstained .This condition is indeed reached by me which is deep †difficult to see †difficult to understand †tranquil ,

excellent ,beyond the reach of mere logic ,subtle ,and to be realized only by the wise ”

After all Buddha was a student of the *Upanishadic* tradition . He talked nothing but pure *Vedanta* .What he called *Nirvana* is nothing but what the *Upanishads* call *Brahman* and equally inexpressible .Hence he refused to talk about *Brahman* .Instead he pointed out what the Hindus call *maya* or self or egotism ,and the way to get rid of it and realise one’s true nature .Swami Vivekananda said ,“Each soul is potentially divine.” Buddha said , “Each soul is a potential Buddha ” .His teachings are meant to help one manifest his or her Buddha nature, i e. divine nature .

### 3 That Buddhism is merely a religion of morality .

Many consider Buddhism as a religion of morality only . This is not correct .Morality or righteous living is a required foundation for the attainment of *Nirvana* i e., realisation of one’s true nature .Buddha was a strong believer in the law of *karma* .He used to say that the results of our actions follow our footsteps just as the wheels of a cart follow the footsteps of the oxen .Morality is unavoidable if an individual or a society desires peace ,joy and harmony .Any violation of moral law brings on its retribution sooner or later .

Since most people desire only worldly happiness ,Buddha prescribed a course of moral conduct; for only meritorious actions can bring happiness to an individual or a society .But for those whose understanding is deeper ,and hence desire to go beyond the wheel of transmigration ,Buddha advocates a series of spiritual disciplines that can confer the blessing of *Nirvana* .

Buddha preached his first sermon at Sarnath after his attainment of perfect knowledge in his thirty fifth year .Buddha was Love and Perfect Wisdom personified .He was a dynamic personality . Out of compassion for humanity he did not cease

preaching until he passed away at the ripe age of eighty .

Having attained illumination ,the Buddha gave forth a joyful utterance in the following words :“I have been looking for the builder of this tabernacle ( e .this my body ,the prison house of the senses )for long . But now ,O you maker of the tabernacle ! you have been found out (by me )and you will not (be able to ) build this tabernacle again .All your rafters are broken and your ridge pole is sundered . My mind , being free from predispositions , has attained the extinction of all desires , *Nirvana* .”

*Nirvana* is the destruction of all cravings and desires .It is desire or craving which leads to the building of the body (binding it to the wheel of existences .Once desires are dead in us ,(the ‘self’ in us )we become free from future births .

In his very first sermon at Saranath Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths about Life which alone lead the way to *Nirvana* or illumination .This was what Buddha taught :

“The first noble truth is the existence of sorrow .Birth is sorrowful ,growth is sorrowful ,illness is sorrowful ,and death is sorrowful .

“The second noble truth is the cause of suffering .The cause of suffering is desire .

“The third noble truth is the cessation of sorrow .He who conquers self will be free from desire .

“The fourth noble truth is the eightfold path that leads to the cessation of sorrow .

“The eightfold path is ( 1 )right views; ( 2 )right aspirations; ( 3 )right speech; ( 4 )right behaviour; ( 5 )right way of earning a livelihood; ( 6 )right efforts; ( 7 )right thoughts; and ( 8 )right contemplation .This is the *dharma* .This is the truth .This is religion .

“He who recognizes the existence of suffering ,its cause ,

its remedy and its cessation, has fathomed the four noble truths .

“He will walk in the right path .Right views will be the torch to light his way .Right aspirations will be his guide .Right speech will be his dwelling place on the road .His gait will be straight ,for it is right behaviour .His refreshments will be the right way of earning his livelihood .Right efforts will be his steps; right thoughts his breath; and right contemplation will give him the peace that follows in his footprints.”

*(To be continued )*

*Swami Dayatmananda*

One has to call on Him with sincere love. If one can somehow acquire love for God, one has nothing more to worry about; one can then advance towards Him very quickly. If one somehow acquires the feeling that God is one's own, one can set one's mind completely at rest. One cannot, however, have real love for God so long as one's mind is preoccupied with sensuous things. When the *kundalini* is awakened as a result of intense spiritual practice and prayer to God, and when the mind gradually rises above the three lower planes and continues to remain in the fourth plane, the aspirant gets visions, etc. of God, and he gradually develops a love for Him. How can anyone have love for God, pure and untouched by sin as He is, unless one's own mind becomes purified? For that, one needs intense spiritual practice and sincere yearning for God.

*Swami Shivananda*

## The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna :A History

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**T**he word gospel comes from the Old English godspel ,which means 'good news .'This good news uplifts human minds .

### The Five Gospels of Ramakrishna

Some of Ramakrishna's teachings have been recorded differently by different writers . Although his teachings are basically the same ,the wording and language he used changed over time and according to his audience .In addition ,writers recorded stories of Ramakrishna in greater or lesser detail , depending on their point of view .We find the same phenomenon in the *Bible* :The same teachings of Jesus or stories about him were recorded differently by Matthew ,Mark ,Luke ,and John .The wording in each gospel is different ,and some stories have more detail than others .It is quite natural for two people to see and hear the same thing at the same time and yet record different descriptions of the event .

Five writers recorded their versions of the gospel of Ramakrishna .In 1878 Girish Chandra Sen ,a disciple of the Brahma leader Keshab Chandra Sen ,published 184 of the Master's teachings in *Adi Kathamrita* .In 1884 Suresh Chandra Datta ,a householder devotee of Ramakrishna ,recorded 950 teachings and published them in *Sri Sri Ramakrishnadever Upadesh* . In 1885 Ram Chandra Datta ,a householder devotee of Ramakrishna ,recorded 300 teachings which were published in *Tattwa prakashika* .M . Mahendra Nath Gupta )preserved the Master's teachings in his diary from 1882 to 1886 .The resulting *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* was published in five volumes

between 1902 and 1932; it has 177 entries. Swami Brahmananda, a monastic disciple of Ramakrishna, recorded the fifth and last gospel. It was published serially in the *Udbodhan* magazine from 1898 to 1900. In 1905 these teachings were collected in a book entitled, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Upadesh*, and it includes 248 teachings of the Master.

All of these gospels were written in Bengali, Ramakrishna's mother tongue. The first three have not yet been translated into English in their entirety. In 1942 M. S.'s five volumes were brought together and published in English as *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna - Vivekananda Centre in New York translated this huge work, and Aldous Huxley wrote the foreword. In 1924 the gospel according to Swami Brahmananda was translated into English and edited by Jnanendra Nath Mukhopadhyay and F. J. Alexander. It was published as *Words of the Master* by the Udbodhan Publication Office, Calcutta.

The Master's words were so impressive and instructive that Swami Shivananda, as a young disciple, felt tempted to take notes. He recalled: "One day at Dakshineswar I was listening to the Master and looking intently at his face. He was explaining many beautiful things. Noticing my keen interest, the Master suddenly said, 'Look here! Why are you listening so attentively? I was taken by surprise. He then added: 'You don't have to do that. Your life is different. I felt as if the Master had divined my intention to keep notes and did not approve of it, and that was why he said that. From that time on I gave up the idea of taking notes of his conversations, and whatever notes I already had I threw into the Ganges.'"

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<sup>1</sup> Swami Chetanananda, *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him* (Vedanta Society: St. Louis, 1990), 125

Ramakrishna advised his young monastic disciples to renounce both externally and internally ,while he advised his householder disciples to renounce internally .Many years later Swami Premananda described how the Master taught the monastic disciples :“Very little of the Master’s teachings are recorded in the Gospel ,”he said . “M .used to visit the Master occasionally and would note down his teachings as he heard them .His teachings to the monastic disciples were given in private .As soon as the householder devotees would leave the room ,he would get up and lock the door and then speak to us living words of renunciation .He would try to impress upon our young minds the emptiness and vanity of worldly enjoyments .”<sup>b</sup>

### The Origin of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

M .based his *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna)* on his diary entries from 26 February 1882 to 10 May 1887 .He began to develop his diaries for publication within a couple of years after the Master’s passing away ,but he did not make all of the entries public .On 11 July 1888 M .read a chapter of the Kathamrita to Holy Mother ,who was then living in Nilambar Babu’s garden house in Belur .After she heard this reading from the manuscript ,she praised M .and encouraged him to write more .On 15 March 1890 M .read another chapter to Holy Mother and received her blessing and approval to publish it .

In 1892 a small pamphlet of 20 pages was released under the title *Paramahamsadever Ukti - Part 3* by Satchidananda Gitaratna ,and collected by Sadhu Mahindranath Gupta .<sup>3</sup> Swami

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<sup>2</sup>Swami Chetanananda, *God Lived with Them* (Vedanta Society: St. Louis, 1997), 189

<sup>3</sup>Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhyay & Sajani Kanta Das, *Samasamayik Drishtite Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa* (General Printers and Publishers: Calcutta, 1968), 122

Vivekananda read this pamphlet<sup>4</sup> and wrote to M .from Antpur on 7 February 1889 : Thanks !100 000 times ,Master !You have hit Ramkristo in the right point Few alas few understand him!!

“My heart leaps in joy - and it is a wonder that I do not go mad when I find anybody thoroughly launched into the midst of the doctrine which is to show peace on earth hereafter .”<sup>5</sup>

M .was busy with family duties ,so he could not always concentrate on developing his diaries for publication .On 26 November 1895 ,Holy Mother wrote to M .from Kamarpukur : Please preserve those teachings of the Master which he left with you .”M .was inspired by her letter to publish *Leaves from the Gospel of the Lord Sri Ramakrishna* ,which came out serially in the English language magazine *Brahmavadin* starting on 15 October 1897 .

Swami Vivekananda read the series and wrote to M from Rawalpindi in October 1897 : Dear M . C'est bon mon ami - Now you are doing just the thing .Come out man .No sleeping all life . Time is flying Bravo that is the way .

“Many many thanks for your publication .Only I am afraid it will not pay its way in a pamphlet form... Never mind - pay or no pay Let it see the blaze of daylight You will have many blessings on you and many more curses but that is always the way of the world sir .This is the time .”

Swami Vivekananda wrote to M .again on 24 November 1897 this time from Dehra Dun : My dear M , Many many thanks

<sup>4</sup> Sunil Behari Ghosh, a researcher and librarian, presumed that *Paramahamsadever Ukti* - Part 1 was compiled and published by Keshab Chandra Sen in 1878, and Part 2 was collected and published by Girish Chandra Sen in 1887, and Part 3 by M. in 1892. Behind his guess is that none could ever find Parts 1 and 2 made by M. (Adapted from *Sri Ramakrishna O Tar Kathamrita*, 219.)

<sup>5</sup> Srīma, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (Kathamrita Bhavan: Calcutta, 1951), 3:vi

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3:vii

for your second leaflet ,it is indeed wonderful .The move is quite original and never was the life of a great teacher 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 the leaflets .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 .

“P S Socratic dialogues are Plato all over .You are entirely hidden .Moreover ,the dramatic part is infinitely beautiful .Everybody likes it here and in the West .”

After M .began publishing the Master's teachings in English in a pamphlet form ,a critic wrote in *Tattwamanjari* magazine :“We have a request to Mr .Gupta to publish these teachings in a big book form instead of in small pamphlets, that will benefit the masses .Again ,we wonder ,why did he publish it in English instead of Bengali ?It is needless to remind him that sometimes the spirit of such deep spiritual truths diminishes while translating them into English .It would be difficult for our people to understand these teachings .”M later acquiesced to the critic's request .

This criticism ,however ,was nothing compared to the appreciation that M .received from many distinguished reviewers .The English language pamphlets created a tremendous stir because readers found Ramakrishna's teachings new and exciting .But M .eventually decided to publish *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* in Bengali so that readers could taste the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3:vii

<sup>8</sup> Sankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha* (Mandal Book House: Calcutta, 1976), 2:275

original beauty of the Master's mother tongue .Again ,he sought Holy Mother's blessing .

On 4 July 1897 Holy Mother wrote to M from Jayrambati : 'My dear child ,whatever you heard from the Master was true . You should not feel any fear in publishing them .At one time he left those teachings in your custody and now he is bringing them to light through you .Know for certain that people's spiritual consciousness will not be awakened without bringing out those teachings .Whatever words of the Master you collected are true . One day while I was listening to your manuscript ,I felt as if the Master was saying all those things ."<sup>9</sup>

With this encouragement from Holy Mother ,M began to develop *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* in right earnest .He published chapters from the book in many Bengali magazines and newspapers such as *Udbodhan* ,*Tattwamanjari* ,*Anusandhan* ,*Arati* , *Alochana* ,*Utsaha* ,*Rishi* ,*Janmabhumi* ,*Navya Bharat* ,*Punya* ,*Pradip* , *Prabasi* ,*Prayas* ,*Bamabodhini* ,*Sahitya* ,*Sahitya Samhita* ,and *Hindu Patrika* <sup>10</sup> .M .then arranged those chapters in chronological order and published them as *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* - Volume I , which was published on 11 March 1902 by Udbodhan Press under Swami Trigunatitananda's supervision .Volume II was published in 1904 ,Volume III in 1908 ,Volume IV in 1910 ,and Volume V in 1932 .In its entirety ,*Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* contains nearly 177 diary entries that M .recorded during Ramakrishna's lifetime and 8 entries that he added after the Master passed away .In addition ,M .collected information from other sources that he included in appendices to those volumes .

Swami Nityatmananda described how M .wrote notes to

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<sup>9</sup> Kathamrita, 3:v

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, *Sri Ramakrishna O Tar Kathamrita* (Ramakrishna Vivekananda Ashrama: Howrah, 1983), 220

himself in his diary .On Sunday ,1 January 1882,<sup>11</sup> Ramakrishna went to attend the Brahmo Festival at Jnan Chaudhury's house in Simla ,Calcutta .M .wrote only two words in his diary entry for that day :*kamarshalar loha* ,meaning 'iron in a smithy .'Based on those two words ,M .wrote the words of the Master :“Why shouldn't it be possible for a householder to give his mind to God ?But the truth is that he no longer has his mind with him .If he had it ,then he could certainly offer it to God .But ,alas ,the mind has been mortgaged - mortgaged to woman and gold .So it is necessary for him constantly to live in the company of holy men . Either he should think of God in solitude day and night ,or he should live with holy men .The mind left to itself gradually dries up .Take a jar of water for instance .If the jar is set aside the water dries up little by little .But that will not happen if the jar is kept immersed in the Ganges .

“The iron becomes red in the forge of a smithy .Take it out and it becomes black as before .Therefore the iron must be heated in the forge every now and then .<sup>12</sup>

On 21 February 1924 a devotee asked M ., “Why did you assume three names: Master ,Srima ,and Mani in the Kathamrita instead of one ?”

M : “Where there is a private conversation ,I put Mani;’ because it is not necessary for the reader to know the person .It is enough to know what the Master said to him .What is the necessity for others to know whether the Master scolded or praised him ?”

The devotee : “Will readers understand if your diary is printed as it is ?”

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<sup>11</sup>This event took place before M. met Sri Ramakrishna. M. collected the information from a reliable source and recorded it in his diary. He later developed and added it in the Kathamrita as an appendix.

<sup>12</sup>M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre: New York, 1969), 1019 and D.P. Gupta & D.K. Sengupta, ed., *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Centenary Memorial* (Srima Trust: Chandigarh, 1982), 142

M : ‘No ,people won’t understand it .It is recorded in a very concise way Some parts are in my mind and some are in the diary ,such as a subtitle in the chapter , The *Brahmachari* and the Snake ’.”<sup>13</sup>

On 16 July 1925 Swami Vireswarananda asked M how he could have written the wonderful Kathamrita from such meagre sketches M humbly replied : ‘By the Master’s grace alone People take these incidents to have occurred over forty years ago .But I see them happening this very moment before my very eyes .In meditation the distance of time vanishes .In love and devotion everything is ever present; there is no past or future .’<sup>14</sup>

On 3 November 1927 a devotee asked M : “Is it true that the Master forbade anyone to record his words except you ?”

M : “The Master did not allow people to record his words in his presence .No one knew that I was recording the Master’s sayings .I habitually maintained a diary ,so I went on recording his words accordingly .When the Master was ill at the Cossipore garden house ,he learned (somehow) that I was recording his conversations ,and he did not forbid it .’<sup>15</sup>

M .would listen and absorb the words of the Master ,and then return home and write in his diary ,sometimes the entire night .On 13 September 1924, M .described the stress this caused : ‘One day on Badurbagan Street ,in front of Vidyasagar’s house I fell unconscious on the sidewalk .Then someone took me home in a horse carriage .When the Master heard about this incident ,he said : ‘Please sleep more and drink milk .And stop writing for some days ’.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Srima Sarada* magazine (Sri Sri Yogeswari Ramakrishna Math: Howrah), 4:135

<sup>14</sup> Swami Nityatmananda, *Srima Darshan* (General Printers and Publishers: Calcutta, 1972), 13:97

<sup>15</sup> *Srima Sarada*, 6:8

<sup>16</sup> *Srima Darshan*, 13:184

## Ramakrishna's Contribution to M's Work

Ramakrishna's life was based on truth, so every one of his words was true. He said that the Divine Mother had never allowed an untruth to pass through his lips. The omniscient Master knew that M. was preserving his message, so from time to time he corrected M.'s ideas to make sure they were accurate. The following conversation took place between Ramakrishna and M. on 9 November 1884 :

Master : "How did you like today's conversation ?"

M : "Very much indeed ."

Master (smiling) "How I spoke about the Emperor Akbar !"

M : "It was very good ."

Master : "Repeat it to me ."

M : "A fakir came to visit Akbar. The Emperor was saying his prayers. In his prayers he was asking God to give him wealth and riches. Thereupon the fakir was about to leave the room quietly. Later, when the Emperor asked him about it, the fakir said, 'If I must beg, why should I beg of a beggar ?'"

Master: "What else did we talk about ?"

M : "You told us a great deal about saving up for the future ."

Master (smiling) "What did I say ?"

M.: "As long as a man feels that he must try, he should make an effort. How well you told us about it at Sinthi !"

Master : "What did I say ?"

M : "God takes upon Himself complete responsibility for one who totally depends upon Him. It is like a guardian taking charge of a minor. You also told us that at a feast a child cannot by himself find a place to eat his meal; someone finds a place for him ."

Master: “No ,that is not quite to the point .I said that the child doesn't fall if the father leads him and holds his hand .”

M : “You also described the three classes of *sadhus* .The best *sadhu* does not move about to get his food; he lives in one place and gets his food there .You told us about that young *sadhu* who said ,when he saw the breasts of a young girl , Why has she those abscesses ? You told us many other things .”

Master (smiling ) “What else ?”

M : “About the crow of Pampa Lake .He repeated the name of Rama day and night .That is why he couldn't drink the water though he went to its edge .And about the holy man in whose book was written only Om Rama .And what Hanuman said to Rama .”

Master: “What did he say ?”

M : “Hanuman said to Rama : I saw Sita in Ceylon; but it was only her body Her mind and soul were lying at Your feet .’

“And about the chataka bird .He will not drink anything but rain water .And about *jnana yoga* and *bhakti yoga* .”

Master: “What did I say about them ?”

M : “As long as one is conscious of the ‘jar,’ the ego will certainly remain .As long as one is conscious of ‘I,’ one cannot get rid of the idea ,I am the devotee and Thou art God .’”

Master: “No ,it is not that; the ‘jar’ doesn't disappear whether one is conscious of it or not .One cannot get rid of the ‘I.’ You may reason a thousand times; still it will not go .”

M remained silent a few moments .

M : “You had that talk with Ishan Mukherji in the Kali temple .We were very lucky to be there .”

Master (smiling ) “Yes yes .Tell me ,what did I say ?”

M : “You said that work is only the first step .You told us that you said to Shambhu Mallick , If God appears before you , will you ask Him for a number of hospitals and dispensaries ?’

“You said another thing : God does not reveal Himself to a person as long as he is attached to work .You said that to Keshab Sen .”

Master: “What did I say ?”

M : “As long as the baby plays with the toy and forgets everything else ,its mother looks after her cooking and other household duties; but when the baby throws away the toy and cries ,then the mother puts down the rice pot and comes to the baby .

“You said another thing that day: ‘Lakshmana asked Rama where one could find God; after a great deal of explanation , Rama said to him ,Brother ,I dwell in the man in whom you find ecstatic love - a love which makes him laugh and weep and dance and sing.’”

Master: “Ah me !Ah me !”

Sri Ramakrishna sat in silence a few minutes .

M : “That day you spoke only words of renunciation to Ishan .Since then many of us have come to our senses .Now we are eager to reduce our duties .You said that day ,Ravana died in Ceylon and Behula wept bitterly for him ’”

Sri Ramakrishna laughed aloud .

M . (humbly ) “Sir ,isn't it desirable to reduce the number of one's duties and entanglements ?”

Master: “Yes .But it is a different thing if you happen to come across a *sadhu* or a poor man .Then you should serve him .”

M : “And that day you spoke very rightly to Ishan about flatterers .They are like vultures on a carcass .You once said that to Padmalochan also .”

Master: No to Vamandas of Ulo .<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes Ramakrishna tested M .'s understanding of

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<sup>17</sup> Gospel, 662-64

specific terms that he used .On 3 August 1884, the Master talked about false and real renunciation .Because M .was a family man , it was not possible for him to renounce completely ,so the Master asked him to renounce mentally .

M : “Mental renunciation is prescribed for those who cannot give up the world outwardly .For superior devotees total renunciation is enjoined - both outer and inner .”

Ramakrishna was silent for a few minutes and then resumed the conversation .

Master: “How did you like what I said about renunciation a little while ago ?”

M : “Very much sir .”

Master: “Tell me ,what is the meaning of renunciation ?”

M : “Renunciation does not mean simply dispassion for the world .It means dispassion for the world and also longing for God .”

Master: “You are right .You no doubt need money for your worldly life; but don’t worry too much about it .Those who surrender their hearts and souls to God ,those who are devoted to Him and have taken refuge in Him ,do not worry much about money .As they earn so they spend .This is what the *Gita* describes as ‘accepting what comes of its own accord .’”<sup>18</sup>

### The Genesis of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

On different occasions M .later related the genesis of the Gospel to the monks and devotees :“Once the Master said to me, ‘The Divine Mother has told me that you have to do a little work for her .You will have to teach the *Bhagavata* ,the word of God ,to humanity .God binds the *Bhagavata* pundit to the world with one tie; otherwise ,who would remain to explain the sacred book ?He keeps the pundit bound for the good of men .That is why the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 506

Divine Mother has kept you in the world :

“To what extent can we foresee God’s plan ?The Master made me start keeping a diary in 1867 when I was a student of class seven at Hare School Since then I recorded in my journal my daily activities ,the places I had visited ,and so on .I met the Master in the later part of February 1882 .That is when my habit of maintaining a diary really became fruitful .When we look back on our past we realize that God is making us do everything .God determines beforehand what he will do through a particular person and then gets it done through him .There were many people around the Master ,but he made me write the chronicle . As a result ,*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* came into existence .I was an apprentice for fifteen years .The hard discipline greatly helped me .It sharpened my memory and increased my skill in writing I could recall the sequence of all of the incidents that had occurred during the day after I returned home at night .I would try to remember the first lines of the songs I had heard .This is the way the Master worked through me .

“I was involved in worldly activities ,bound to my work , and could not visit the Master whenever I wished .Therefore I used to note down his words so that I could think over what he had said between my visits to him .In this way the impressions made on my mind might not be counteracted by the stress of worldly work and responsibilities .It was thus for my own benefit that I first took notes ,so that I might realize his teachings more perfectly .

“I used to memorize the Master’s words ,and then after returning home I would write brief notes in my diary .Sometimes I would spend the whole night in completing my record .Later I would fill in all the details from memory .Sometimes I would spend seven days completing the record of one day’s happenings . Thus *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* appeared in book form from

the notes of my diary .Sometimes I had to wait for a word of the Master's to come to my mind as a chataka bird waits for a drop of rainwater to fall .Sometimes I meditated on one scene over a thousand times .As a result I could vividly visualize the Master's divine play ,though it had happened long before .By the grace of the Master I used to feel that his play had just happened . Therefore one can say that it was written in the Master's presence . At times I would not be satisfied with a particular description of an episode ,so I would get absorbed in meditation on the Master . Then the correct picture would vividly appear in my mind . Therefore ,from a human standpoint there was a great distance of time ,but in my thought world I felt that it had happened just before I recorded it .My account is not culled from other sources .I recorded whatever I heard from the Master's lips with my own ears and whatever I saw of his life with my own eyes .

“*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* is the world's only firsthand record of the life and teachings of an avatar .One can collect materials about Sri Ramakrishna in three ways :First ,direct observation recorded on the same day; second ,direct observation but unrecorded during the lifetime of the Master; and third ,hearsay ,also unrecorded during the lifetime of the Master .The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna belongs to the first category .I was present during each scene of the Gospel .

“I have published my diary very carefully .If there is any mistake in it ,then its value will diminish .People do not realize that at one time I had to study the rules of evidence .If a witness makes a single mistake ,the entire case becomes nullified .Addressing the judge ,the lawyer says ,‘My Lord ,this witness is not reliable .I used to visit the court and observe all these details .The evidence of an eyewitness is very valuable .For that reason the judge asks ,“Did you see this yourself ?’If a person has seen

and heard something himself ,his words carry weight I checked all the facts and details before I published *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* .<sup>19</sup>

When somebody asked M . to remove some of the repetitions from the Gospel ,he replied :“I cannot do that .The Master told the same parable to different people .If I remove a particular section ,the train of the conversation will be broken . Moreover ,you won’t be able to see the effect of the Gospel on a particular person’s life .The Master gave the same teaching to five different people in five different places .What he said to Bankim , he said to others also; and whatever conversation he had with Vivekananda he had with others too .

“You see , sometimes the brilliance of a diamond is enhanced by changing its setting .Putting it on the dusty ground produces one effect ,and putting it on a green lawn produces another . But putting it in a casket lined with blue velvet produces the most brilliant effect of all .The same is true of the words in the Gospel .The rays of the sun look different when they fall on water , on the earth , and on glass , but the maximum brilliance is produced when the sun is reflected on glass . So I cannot avoid the repetitions in the Gospel ,because removing them would disturb the Master’s dialogue .

“Once Hriday said to the Master :‘Uncle ,please reserve some of your best teachings .Otherwise ,if you say everything all at once ,and then repeat the same thing again and again ,people will not come to you anymore .’The Master replied :‘You rascal !I shall repeat my words fifty times .What does it matter to you ?’<sup>20</sup>

M . added the Kathamrita to the curriculum of his school . When M .was accused by some people of trying to sell his books to the students he calmly replied :“The students will understand

<sup>19</sup>*Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*, 321-23

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 323

the effect of reading the Gospel when they enter family life .The Master used to say ,‘The world is a burning fire ’. And I fully realized it .After the boys enter the world and are tormented by sorrows and sufferings ,the Master’s immortal words will save them ,like a loving mother .If they remember at least one of the Master’s teachings that will be like a boat to ferry them across the turbulent ocean of *maya* and it will bring peace to their lives ”<sup>21</sup>

In spite of his illness ,M read the proofs of the last part of the Kathamrita at 1 o’clock in the morning by the light of a kerosene lantern . When lovingly chastised by Swami Nityatmananda ,he said :”People are finding peace by reading this book ,the Master’s immortal message .It is inevitable that the body will meet its end ,so it is better that it be used for spreading peace to others .We are in the world and have fully experienced how much pain there is in it ,yet I have forgotten that pain through *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* .I am hurrying so that the book may come out soon ”<sup>22</sup>

### Ramakrishna’s Language in the Kathamrita

The teachings of Buddha and Christ spread quickly among the masses because they spoke in the language of the people .Buddha used Pali ,while Christ taught in Aramaic . Language is the carrier of ideas ,and those great teachers explained their ideas through tales and parables that were very effective .Even people who had no formal education could understand their message .

The tenth chapter of the *Lalita vistara* describes Prince Siddhartha’s education under Vishwamitra .Siddhartha (ater Buddha )learned 64 lipis - that is ,dialects or languages ,such as

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 323

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 323

Anga lipi ,Banga lipi ,Magadh lipi ,Shakari lipi ,Dravir lipi ,Chin lipi ,Brahmavali lipi ,and so on .He also studied the *Vedas* in Sanskrit.

Halley's *Bible Handbook* describes Christ's use of language :  
"Aramaic was the common language of the people .This was the language Jesus used .He was instructed in Hebrew ,the language of the Old Testament Scriptures .He must have known Greek ,for it was the language of a large part of the population ,and the universal language of the time .Jesus was familiar with both the Hebrew and Septuagint Old Testament .His own language is superb ."<sup>23</sup>

Before his crucifixion Jesus talked to Pilate ,who was a Roman ruler ,which indicates he might have known Latin .

Like Buddha and Christ ,Ramakrishna taught in the language of the people .His mother tongue was Bengali ,but he also knew some English words ,including friend ,refine ,like ,honorary ,society ,under ,tax ,cheque ,and thank you .Although he had no formal education ,he could read and write Bengali . Once he humorously said : 'Narendra considers me to be illiterate , but I know the alphabet .Ramakrishna also spoke Hindi with his guru Tota Puri and with monks from western India .He studied Sanskrit "a little" at his brother's Sanskrit School in Calcutta . Again ,he once said : 'If a pundit speaks to me in Sanskrit ,I can follow him ,but I cannot speak it myself ."<sup>24</sup>

Before we discuss the charm of Ramakrishna's language and how M .recorded it almost verbatim in the Kathamrita ,it is important to understand the difference between the colloquial mother tongue and the literary language .Children learn their mother tongue spontaneously from their parents ,friends ,and

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<sup>23</sup> H.H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, 1965), 493

<sup>24</sup> Gospel, 407

relatives but they learn literary language from teachers in school .

As a child Ramakrishna learned his native mother tongue , which was Bengali ,but he never learned literary language or 'language proper ,'from his schooling .Thus ,when we read the Kathamrita , we enjoy the freshness and liveliness of Ramakrishna's colloquial village language . His language is simple and sweet; his words are clear and charming; his examples are apt and beautiful; his descriptions are poetic and graphic; his ideas are profound and meaningful; his style of conversation is original and captivating; his gestures and mimicry are joyful and entertaining .Ramakrishna used short and simple sentences to communicate his profound teachings so his powerful statements would remain in the minds of his listeners Even the great savants of India sat spellbound listening to this uneducated temple priest .

On 28 March 1875 , *The Indian Mirror* wrote about Ramakrishna : 'We met one (a sincere Hindu devotee )not long ago and were charmed by the depth ,penetration ,and simplicity of his spirit .The never ceasing metaphors and analogies ,in which he indulged are most of them as apt as they are beautiful .<sup>25</sup>

On 19 August 1886, *The Indian Mirror* wrote again :“He Ramakrishna was an unlettered man but his commonsense was strong and his power of observation keen .He had a facility for expressing his ideas in such homely language that he could make himself easily understood by all on intricate points of religion and morality .His childlike simplicity and outspokenness ,his deep religious fervour and self denial ,his genial and sympathetic nature and his meek and unassuming manners won the hearts of those who came in contact with him ,and music from his lips had a peculiar charm on those who heard him sing .<sup>26</sup>

Swami Vivekananda said :“My ideal of language is my

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<sup>25</sup> *Samasamayik Drishtite*, 3

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47

Master's language ,most colloquial and yet most expressive .It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed .<sup>27</sup>

When flowers bloom ,bees come of their own accord .In New York Vivekananda gave a lecture entitled "My Master" in which he said :“People came by thousands to see and hear this wonderful man who spoke in a patois ,every word of which was forceful and instinct with light .For it is not what is spoken ,much less the language in which it is spoken ,but the personality of the speaker ,which dwells in everything he says that carries weight . Every one of us feels this at times .We hear most splendid orations , most wonderfully reasoned-out discourses ,and we go home and forget everything .At other times we hear a few words in the simplest of language ,and they remain with us all the rest of our lives ,become part and parcel of ourselves and produce lasting results .The words of a man who can put his personality into them take effect ,but he must have tremendous personality .All teaching means giving and taking :the teacher gives and the taught receives ,but the one must have something to give ,and the other must be open to receive .”<sup>28</sup>

It is true that Ramakrishna did not have much formal education ,but his words had the force of scripture and he spoke only truth . Vivekananda later said : “The *Vedas* and other scriptures were so long hidden in the darkness of ignorance ,and the light of Sri Ramakrishna has revealed them again .”<sup>29</sup> While in America ,Vivekananda reminisced to his disciples : “When I think of that man Ramakrishna I feel like a fool ,because I want to read books and he never did .He never wanted to lick the plates after other people had eaten .That is why he was his own book .”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama: Calcutta, 1968), 5:259

<sup>28</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, ed., *Vivekananda: Yogas and other works* (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre: New York, 1953), 708

<sup>29</sup> Belur Math Rule Book, 10

<sup>30</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 6:64

Observing the Master's encyclopaedic knowledge of religion and philosophy, a disciple asked him how he came to have such deep and broad knowledge. Ramakrishna answered: "I have not read; I have listened and learned. I have made a garland of their knowledge and put it round my neck, and I have offered it at the feet of the Mother."<sup>31</sup>

On 2 January 1884, Ramakrishna said to M.: "At Kamarpukur I have seen grain dealers measuring paddy. As one heap is measured away another heap is pushed forward to be measured. The Mother supplies devotees with the 'heap' of Knowledge. Weeping I prayed to the Mother: O Mother, reveal to me what is contained in the *Vedas* and *Vedanta*. Reveal to me what is in the *Purana* and the *Tantra*. One by one She has revealed all these to me."<sup>32</sup> Ramakrishna used to say that the Divine Mother spoke through his mouth.

M. was blessed with the opportunity to record Ramakrishna's divine language in the pages of the Kathamrita. He did not vitiate that wonderful language by paraphrasing it or rewriting the Master's words. Like a skilled craftsman, M. set those divine jewels of the Master's words in the pages of the Kathamrita. By resorting to his recorded notes and his meditation, he recreated Ramakrishna's dialogue. I had the opportunity to see some pages of M.'s diary - and from those I could understand that without divine grace, no one could have accurately recorded those divine dialogues of Ramakrishna.

M. emphatically said, "Every word of the Master is a mantra." By this he meant that reflecting upon those words connects individual souls with God. Here I present some of the Master's words as M. recorded them in the Kathamrita.

"The goal of human life is to realize God."

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<sup>31</sup> Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama: Calcutta, 1931), 89-90

<sup>32</sup> Gospel, 376

- “ Lust and gold are *maya* ”
- “ Practising truthfulness is the austerity of this kaliyuga ”
- “The scripture the devotee and God are all one ”
- “All troubles will cease when the ‘I’ dies ”
- “I am the instrument and You are the operator ”
- “Not I not I but Thou ,Thou ”
- “As many faiths so many paths ”
- “Tie non-dual knowledge in the corner of your cloth and then do whatever you like ”
- “Be a devotee but don’t be foolish ”
- “ God is the wish fulfilling tree ”
- “ *Brahman* and His power are identical ”
- “The essence of *Vedanta* is *Brahman* is real and the world is impermanent ”
- “The essence of the Gita is this Renounce renounce ”
- “The attached mind is like a box of wet matches ”
- “God without form and with form - both are true ”
- “As is a man’s feeling of love so is his gain ”
- “Meditate in your mind ,in the forest ,or in the corner of your room ”
- “ Dive deep ”
- “Satchidananda alone is the guru ”
- “Please God then everyone will be pleased ”
- “God has become everything ,but He is manifested to the utmost in human beings “
- “ It is petty to limit God ”
- “True religion is the union of mind and speech ”
- “Let there be no theft (hypocrisy) in the chamber of your heart { e .shun hypocrisy }”

Translating Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita

M .wrote his first drafts of the Kathamrita in Bengali so

that he could read them to Holy Mother .In 1888 M .expanded four entries from his diary : ¶ )15 June 1884 ,Surendra's Garden , Calcutta; ¶ )25 June 1884 ,visit to a Hindu Pundit and Preacher (Shashadhar ) Calcutta; ¶ )5 August 1882 ,Visit to Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar ,Calcutta , ¶ )3 August 1884 ,Dakshineswar Thakurbari .M .then translated these entries into English under the heading *Leaves from the Gospel of the Lord Sri Ramakrishna* ,and they were published serially in the *Brahmavadin* magazine (started by Swami Vivekananda in 1895 )on 15 October 1897 ,16 November 1897 ,1 February 1898 ,and 16 May 1898 .He wrote these articles under his pen name :According to M . a,son of the Lord and servant .He also added a footnote below the title : "Translated by M .from original records kept in Bengali by M . These records are based on notes put down from memory by M . on the very day of the meeting ,shortly after the meeting was over , and purport to be an attempt to give the Lord's own words as far as possible ." <sup>33</sup> Later these four entries were published in two pamphlets in English .

Enthusiastic readers were not satisfied with these pamphlets and demanded that the entire Gospel be published in book form .M .worked diligently to develop his diary entries , writing first in Bengali and then translating them into English .In 1907 M .took the four chapters from the *Brahmavadin* ,added ten more chapters ,and produced a book entitled *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (According to M , a son and disciple of the Lord )" M . added a subtitle : "The Ideal Man for India and for the World .This publication , part one of the Gospel , was published by Brahmavadin Office ,Madras .It consists of 386 pages .In its second edition ,M .deleted the subtitle .Of this Gospel ,M .wrote : "It is no sentence by sentence translation but M .s own rendering

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<sup>33</sup> *Brahmavadin* magazine, 3:104

of his thoughts rather than language ,directly into English with many elaborations and elucidating repetitions .<sup>34</sup> In 1912 Swami Trigunatitananda of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco published this first edition of the Gospel .

The English of the first edition was archaic ,a kind of evangelical language :Thou thinketh ,thou comest ,thou askest , thou art ,and so on .When M .made revisions for the second edition ,he freed it of its Biblical turns of expression .This edition was published in 1911 by Ramakrishna Math ,Madras .The Madras Math published several more editions and this work was in circulation until 1942 ,when the complete translation of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (which contained all five volumes of the original Kathamrita )by Swami Nikhilananda came out .In 1978 the Madras Math reprinted M 's version under the title *The Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* .

In 1907 Swami Abhedananda of the Vedanta Society of New York published another version ,the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* . In the preface Swami Abhedananda wrote :“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 .

“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 .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 .<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> D.P. Gupta & D.K. Sengupta, ed., *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Centenary Memorial* (Srima Trust: Chandigarh, 1982), 147

<sup>35</sup> Gospel, preface, vii-ix

Although Swami Abhedananda's edited version of the Gospel received many favourable reviews from American papers and was translated into Spanish , Portuguese , Danish , Scandinavian ,and Czech ,it lacks the flavour and style of M .s original .M later remarked that Swami Abhedananda added his own reminiscences to the book <sup>36</sup> . In 1939 Ramakrishna Vedanta Math republished this book as *The Memoirs of Ramakrishna* .

In 1922 Ramakrishna Math , Madras , published an English translation of Volume II of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* , without consulting M . who was still alive .The material of this volume first came out serially in *Vedanta Kesari* .M .disapproved and requested Swami Shivananda , the president of the Ramakrishna Order , to stop the publication . *Vedanta Kesari* discontinued the series ,but the Madras Math published this material as volume two of the Gospel .This volume was edited by a Westerner and the second edition was published in 1928 .Then it was withdrawn as it did not meet the author's approval . Regarding this volume two ,M .commented : 'Even a student of eighth grade translates from Bengali into English .Translation is not an easy thing .One should transmit the idea and mood .A literal translation is not enough . Western people do not understand the Bengali language . While talking , the Master would express an idea with a living feeling .In my translation I have tried my best to convey the same spirit by preserving his words as far as possible .The primary importance is the sense or meaning; words or the language are only secondary .And I have tried to express it in a simple language . In translation , the meaning changes if one overlooks the viewpoint of the Master's saying .'<sup>37</sup>

M .was very particular about his record of the Master's

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<sup>36</sup> *Srima Darshan*, 5:126

<sup>37</sup> *Srima Darshan*, 3:295-97

words It was extremely painful for him if his work was translated in a distorted form .Swami Avyaktananda began to publish the translation of other volumes of Kathamrita in *Morning Star* ,a magazine in Patna .

On 17 May 1930 M .wrote to him : 'Dear Avyakta Babaji , My love and salutations to you all .The translation of the Gospel in the *Morning Star* is ,I regret to say ,not satisfactory to me .Being an eye witness ,I naturally want the spirit to be kept up in the translation .Moreover ,the report of a meeting should not appear in a mutilated form .The translation should be done by myself . You may do the work after my passing ,which is by no means a distant contingency .I am 76 and my health is not at all good .It is painful to see the Gospel presented in this way .I do not approve of the translation which has appeared as Vol .II from Madras . M .<sup>88</sup>

In 1942 , Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna - Vivekananda Centre ,New York ,translated all five volumes of M .'s Kathamrita into English and published the work in one chronologically arranged volume .He did not translate the entire Kathamrita .As he writes in the preface :“I have made a literal translation ,omitting only a few pages of no particular interest to English speaking readers .” He wrote a long biographical introduction on Ramakrishna ,replacing the sketch that M .had written .On the whole ,Swami Nikhilananda's translation is superb and elegant .The Swami's manuscript was edited by Margaret Woodrow Wilson ( daughter of President Woodrow Wilson )and Joseph Campbell ( a famous scholar and orientalist ) And John Moffitt ,Jr . ( a poet and scholar )used his poetical talent on the mystical and spiritual songs of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* ,which enhanced their beauty .Aldous Huxley wrote

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<sup>88</sup> Abhay Chandra Bhattacharya, *Srimar Jivan Darshan* (Grantha Bharati: Calcutta, 1990), 351

the foreword to this work .This translation drew the attention of the literary world of the East and the West .Dr S .Radhakrishnan wrote : “Swami Nikhilananda has done an excellent piece of work .His very readable English translation of the Ramakrishna - Kathamrita will enable Western readers to understand the deep spiritual life of Sri Ramakrishna and the homely way in which profound truths are conveyed to ordinary mortals ,and I hope that the book will have wide publicity .<sup>89</sup>

This classic translation of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* has now been translated into most of the major languages of the world .The Bengali Kathamrita also has been translated into most of the Indian languages .

### M's Diary Lost and Found

Now and then M .would visit Gadadhar Ashrama (a branch of the Ramakrishna Order )in South Calcutta ,as he loved to stay with the monks in the monastery .Wherever he went ,he carried his diary ,which reminded him of the Master .Sometimes he would open it to an entry ,meditate on a particular scene ,and then talk about it to the monks and devotees .On 16 January 1924 M .was returning by tram from Gadadhar Ashrama to his home in Central Calcutta .Absorbed in thoughts of the Master ,he accidentally left his diary next to his seat while changing trams at the Esplanade Station .The diary was found two days later .

On 18 January M .described his agony to the devotees : “What terrible distress I have gone through !It was worse than losing a son .I felt I should not live anymore; otherwise why had the Master taken away his words from me ?When I got back my diary ,I realized that this body would remain a few days more . Last Tuesday while returning from Gadadhar Ashrama ,I left my diary in the tram car .It struck me when I returned home .It was then 11 00 a m .Immediately I rushed to the Kali temple of

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<sup>89</sup> From the back cover of the Gospel

Thanthania I had visited the Divine Mother after getting down from the tram .I thought that I had left the diary there .Some pundits were reading the holy scriptures in front of the temple I asked them but no one gave me a positive answer .Then I tried to locate my tram ticket ,which I had torn and discarded on the sidewalk It took me 45 minutes to collect those pieces of the ticket and then bring them home I pasted them on a piece of paper with flour gum and discovered the number of the ticket .

“Immediately I went to the Gadadhar Ashrama .In the afternoon the devotees took the ticket and went to the Kalighat tram depot .They discovered the name of the conductor who was on that tram .On Wednesday morning news came that the diary had been found .The conductor had deposited it with the overseer of the tram depot .This overseer was a devotee .He saw the name ‘Jayrambati’ on the cover of the diary ,so he carefully saved it .

“In the evening I fervently prayed to the Master .My fear did not go away even after I learned that the diary had been found . I was worried that it might be lost again before picking it up .Oh , how much fear and anxiety I went through for that diary !How sincerely I prayed to the Master for that !What joy I felt when it came to my hand !

“Again ,another thought arose in my mind :It is not a big deal I left the diary in the tram car and the conductor deposited it in the office .That is the normal procedure .After receiving the diary ,I felt that it had not been necessary to say so many prayers . Such are the vagaries of our minds !It behaved in quite another way once the diary was retrieved .You see ,many things could have happened :There could have been a tram accident ,or someone could have been run over ,or the conductor might not have taken proper care of it ”

A Devotee : It also might have fallen into the hands of the

sweeper of the car .”

M : Yes it could have been or someone could have taken it and thrown it away on the street .But as soon as I got the diary back I forgot all those possibilities .What irony !And we live with this mind ,which plays tricks on us all the time .So we should always pray :May we not deviate from our goal .May we not forget God when something has been accomplished .”

M presented a copy of the Kathamrita to the overseer as a token of his gratefulness <sup>40</sup> .

An Interview with M at Morton School on 20 March 1924

Swami Madhavananda , the president of Advaita Ashrama in Mayavati , was working on a biography of Ramakrishna . He found some discrepancies between the Kathamrita by M and the Lilaprasanga by Swami Saradananda , so he went to M to verify those facts .Furthermore ,he wanted to ask M how he had recorded the Kathamrita and gathered some other information about the Master .

Swami Madhavananda (to M. ) “How many times did Sri Ramakrishna go on pilgrimage ?You have mentioned two times .”

M : “Yes ,twice .First ,the Master went with Mathur; then he went with Mathur’s sons .At that time one could go to Varanasi by train .I corresponded with the Railway Company with reference and compared its record of the dates and of who went with him ,and they were the same .Moreover ,there is some circumstantial evidence .I visited Janbazar and Barrackpore and collected information from the descendants of Rani Rasmani .”

Swami Madhavananda : “Did you write in your diary immediately after listening to the Master ?”

M.: “No I didn’t write on the spot .After I returned home I

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<sup>40</sup> *Srima Darshan*, 5:55-57 and *Srima Sarada* 1959:251

wrote from memory . Sometimes I spent the whole night completing an entry My record (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) is not a collection from other sources .I wrote down whatever I heard with my own ears from the lips of the Master and whatever I saw of his life with my own eyes .I didn't collect materials like historians or write like the antiquarians .”

Swami Madhavananda : It is amazing that within such a short period there are so many different versions of the Master's life and teachings !”

M.: “This is nothing to wonder at .It happens that way . Look at the *Bible* there is little similarity among the four gospels recorded by Matthew ,Mark ,Luke and John .The same thing will happen in the case of the Master .Sometimes I spent seven days recording from memory the events of one day - arranging chronologically the songs ,stories ,*samadhi* and so on .”

Swami Madhavananda : “To whom did the Master offer the articles during the night of Kali Puja at Shyampukur house ?”

M.: “He offered them to himself .”

Swami Madhavananda : ‘Did he offer them to himself or to Mother Kali ?”

M : ‘In fact ,he offered them to himself .As soon as all of the devotees had offered flowers to the Master , his hands assumed the gestures symbolizing fearlessness and the bestowal of boons (that are seen in images of Kali) .Thus (saying so ,M . demonstrated those two gestures with his own hands ) Then everyone realized who the Master was .”

Swami Madhavananda : “What do you know about the name Ramakrishna'?”

M.: “I didn't hear anything from the Master about his name .Probably Ramakrishna' was the name given by his family , because the prefix of his brothers' names was 'Rama' (such as Ramkumar and Rameswar ). They were all devotees of

Ramachandra ,and Raghuvir was their household deity .The village people called him Gadai .We did not know that he was called Gadadhar .We learned it later .Tota Puri didn't give him the name Ramakrishna ,because long before Tota Puri arrived the name 'Ramakrishna Bhattacharya' was registered in Rani Rasmani's documents .”

Swami Madhavananda :“A knower of *Brahman* came to Dakshineswar who shared food with the dogs .Who followed that knower of *Brahman* ?Was it Hriday or Haladhari ?”

M : “Haladhari .”

Swami Madhavananda :“Who returned with bel leaves instead of visiting his daughter's house ? You have written 'Haladhari's father ,'and Swami Saradananda has written 'the Master's father '”

M : “I know it that way (that is ,the version I have written).”

Swami Madhavananda :“Akshay Sen (*the author of Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*) has written about a pundit who sat on the Master's bed with his shoes on .What is your opinion about that ?”

M : “No ,that is not correct I was present .The pundit sat on the floor .As soon as the Master touched his chest with his feet , the pundit exclaimed ,O guru please awaken my consciousness .’ That man had a very devotional temperament .”

Swami Madhavananda :“How many years did the Master go through a spiritual tempest ?”

M.: “Seven years .The Master said that his family members then took him back to Kamarpukur for his wedding .”

Swami Madhavananda :“Whom did the Master send to Bankim Chattopadhyay ?”

M.: “The Master sent Girish Babu and myself to Bankim , saying ,‘Please go to Bankim and invite him to come here.’ Bankim also invited the Master to visit him but he could not go .”

Swami Madhavananda : ‘Did Krishnadas Pal (a national leader and the editor of *Hindu Patriot*) visit the Master ?’

M.: “Yes he did .The Master said about him , Krishnadas observed the Hindu custom .He entered my room after leaving his shoes outside ‘I asked him ‘What is the goal of human life ? He replied ,‘It is to do good to the world ‘I told him ‘You see this world ? Have you seen innumerable crab eggs floating in the Ganges during the rainy season ?As many eggs so many worlds . They are numberless .Who are you to do good to the world ?You better try to help yourself .God dwells in every being .Be blessed by serving Him in all beings .The owner of the world will look after his own affairs .You look to your own path .’”

Swami Madhavananda : “When did the Master meet Keshab Sen ?”

M.: “In 1875 .”

Swami Madhavananda : “Will you publish the fifth part of *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* ?It would be nice if you would publish the Master and Bankim’s meeting in it .”

M.: “I want to do that .The Basumati publishing house sent a person to me .They are eager to publish it .”

Senior Jiten : “Swami Madhavananda and others are writing a biography of the Master .”

M.: “Who else will write it ?They have practised so much austerity and lived with the disciples of the Master .Moreover they live in the Himalayas (Advaita Ashrama Mayavati).

“Mayavati Ashrama is doing a marvellous job .It has published many important books .The monks are doing *nishkam karma* (unselfish action )without any personal motive .”

Swami Madhavananda left after having some refreshments <sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> *Srima Darshan*, 6:103-110

## Characteristics of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

M . had a photographic memory , artistic talent , and , above all ,a poetic imagination .Though one can challenge the historicity of Christ ,Buddha ,or Krishna ,one cannot challenge the existence of Ramakrishna .M .meticulously documented his conversations with the Master ,carefully noting the dates and times ,the places and the people who were present and even any songs that were sung .

Did Ramakrishna say anything new ? Not really .He reinterpreted the same ancient Truth He said , 'The money which is used at the time of a Nawab & Muslim king becomes outdated with the rule of a Badshah [Muslim emperor ]' The coins change according to the rule of different dynasties .Similarly ,the ancient avatars brought the message that was needed for their particular age and the conditions in which they lived .Now a new avatar has preached according to the need of our age .One hundred years ago people did not know much about modern medicine .They treated their diseases with herbs and natural medicines .Now we use antibiotics .Herbs and antibiotics are both medicines ,but their use changes with the times .Krishna said in the Gita , 'Arjuna , I am speaking to you the same Truth again .'<sup>42</sup> Tautology is a weakness in logic ,but it is not a weak point in scripture .The scriptures never tire of declaring the same truth again and again in different languages in different ages .

In the Gospel we find that M .not only preserved the teachings of Ramakrishna but also described the settings in order to make a deeper impression on the reader's mind .Here is an example of a description from the Gospel ,dated 22 July 1883 :“Sri Ramakrishna had enjoyed a little rest after his midday meal .The room had an atmosphere of purity and holiness .On the walls

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<sup>42</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, 10:13

hung pictures of gods and goddesses ,among them being one of Christ rescuing the drowning Peter .Outside the room were plants laden with fragrant flowers and the Ganges could be seen flowing towards the south It was the rainy season; the exuberant Ganges was hurrying to meet the ocean and was happy to touch and to see the holy ground where the great saint of Dakshineswar resided .<sup>43</sup>

Here, M.was comparing the spiritual seekers who were coming to meet Ramakrishna to rivers merging in the infinite ocean of *Satchitananda*.

*(to be continued)*

Heaven is a place created by *Maya* to tantalize man and to entice him from the ideal. We have heard of the sirens in the mid-ocean, who are very beautiful to look at and who sing so sweetly that sailors are irresistibly drawn to them. But as soon as the sirens touch them, they are transformed into beasts. So these heavenly pleasures and the senses are like sirens which entice poor sailors sailing on this ocean of life, and when they hold them in their clutches they transform them into brutes. The scriptures say: Sleeping, eating and propagating we have in common with the lower animals-and how many of us do more than that? We have been transformed by the sirens of *Maya* until we are little superior to animals.

*Swami Ramakrishnananda*

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<sup>43</sup>Srima, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (Kathamrita Bhavan: Calcutta, 1957), 1:129 and

## A Thread from the Bhagavad Gita

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A thread emerging from the *Bhagavad Gita* reaches the heart of Europe long before the Hindu scriptures became generally known in the West

The *Bhagavad Gita* is of very ancient origin. Some Western scholars date it as far back as the 3rd century BC, but it may be much older. The first translation into English was not however until the 19th century translation by Wilkins, knowledge of which soon spread among scholars in other European countries. Was this however really its first influence to be found in Europe? Far from it.

If one searches through the various possible traces of influence, one can find it half-hidden in some monuments of literature, extending across the whole continent. There thus seems to be a connecting thread, which it is interesting to trace and muse on.

*The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 15, verse 1, reads; “They speak of the indestructible *Asvatha* having its root above and branches below, whose leaves are the metres. He who knows it knows the *Vedas*.” This “upside-down tree” is a remarkable image and it appears to have inspired more than one European writer.

The ancient Greeks, partly as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, had access to India and in their writings described the land they visited, quoting from its scriptures. In this way the image from the *Bhagavad Gita* was first passed on to Europe.

There was, however, another avenue. The Arab scholar Al-Biruni lived in Khwarizm from 973 to 1050 AD. In the year 1017 AD Mahmud of Ghazni annexed Khwarizm. Al-Biruni

accompanied Mahmud on his travels in India, learned Sanskrit and translated the *Bhagavad Gita*. The Arabic text probably eventually became available to European scholars through the Moorish influence.

Writing in the 14th century, the Italian poet Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, Paradise Canto 18, also refers to a tree drawing its life from above, just like the *Asvatha* tree. Dante's work was widely read and became an influence throughout Europe, especially in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean.

Finally, coming to Western Europe, we find the same image used in Spain, in Tirso de Molina's play *Tanto es lo de más como lo de menos*. The same idea is developed by Juan Manuel in his *Libro del Cavallero et del escudero*. Moving away from its original meaning, the image was also developed and adapted to become a moral emblem of man as an upside-down tree, partly denoting internal discord.

This thread running through the national literatures of many nations across the globe shows how an idea born in one country can in the course travel a great distance even in the days when world travel as we know it today did not exist and nations appeared to be too remote from one another for any influence to be traced. □

Is meditation an easy thing ? Remember , it is next only to *samadhi* . Try to leave everything to the Lord . Resign yourself entirely to him . Devotion , self-surrender , and all other virtues will grow from within as you practice meditation .

*Swami Brahmananda*

## Arati and Self-Renewal

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**A**s the sun sets ,as cows and birds return home ,as the rivers flow along with their eternal murmurs ,as thousands of seekers sit in silence in contemplation all over India and in many parts of the world you begin to hear the melodious tingling of bells and the singing of one of the most significant and meaningful hymns ever written by a prophet .In almost all the centres (*ashramas*) of the Ramakrishna Math ,the Sarada Math ,in hundreds of private centres and in numerous houses ,vespers are conducted -daily ,weekly ,occasionally ,as the case may be . Called *arati* or *aratrikam* in Sanskrit ,this service is one of the popular and simple means of adoring God .

Many of us have participated in the evening vespers (*arati*) in one of the *ashramas* of the Ramakrishna Order or Sarada Math or in holy places associated with Ramakrishna Sarada - Vivekananda .During the arati we either meditate listening to the great song *khandana bhava bandhana* composed by Swamiji, accompany others in the singing ,pray silently or silently observe the priest showing lamps ,conch ,a piece of cloth ,flower and fly whisk -in that order -to the deity .Many of us have wondered in what way we are benefited by participating in the *arati* .First of all ,as saints and scriptures teach us ,even a moment spent in the Lord's presence has a great value .We common people spend a lot of our time in worldly pursuits .The environment in which we live and work is full of negative ,worldly thoughts .Temples are houses of God ,where the Lord shines and His words and grace flow constantly .Our trouble torn minds can find solace in temples easily .The Lord is eternally present everywhere and His

manifestation is more in places where He is adored regularly. So while the adoration of the Supreme is taking place, we can all have faith that He is graciously receiving our prayers and adoration. So this is one great benefit of participating in holy rituals like *arati*. Less worries, less tension, less problems.

Second, it is believed that the Omnipresent Lord manifests Himself more during services like worship and *arati*. So, our presence in the prayer hall or temple during that period will bring His blessings. Third, with nature all around changing from one phase to another, when the day is transforming itself into night, the inner nature and the mind too changes. So the mind becomes meditative and calm. There is possibly a further benefit from participating in the evening vespers in any of the *ashramas* or temples, and the purpose of this little article is about that.

Who are We ?

Before we discuss this benefit, we must point out something. There is an eternal question: "Who are we?" Our spiritual masters have tirelessly pointed out to us the following truths: We are not the clothes we have worn, however costly they might be. We are not our physical bodies, however strong, well-built and handsome they might be. We are not our subtle bodies, though it may consist of the most intelligent mind, the most brilliant intellect, a never failing memory, and a strong ego. We are not our causal bodies either, which is quite unknown to us. Who are we, then? We are the Self, the *Atman*, that infinite, the whole, the One without a second, the deathless, birthless, pure Divine entity. All of our avatars and prophets tell us this. All the scriptures direct our minds to this. This is the fundamental concept taught by *Vedanta*. So we are the *Atman*, but are wearing various 'coverings' like the gross, subtle, and causal bodies.

This simply means that when I am identifying myself

with any of these I am wrong and am under illusion. If I think I am my body for instance, I am wrong and I am deluded. Living a deluded life is not a welcomed thing. Living a false life is of no value. If I move about imagining that I am Napoleon Bonaparte, people will force me to an asylum. So I must strive to know the reality.

Now, what are these three bodies - gross, subtle, and causal - made of? Our causal body is the result of primordial ignorance. Our subtle body consists of 19 items (the mind, the intellect, the ego, the memory, the five energies, the five sense organs, and the five organs of action). It is made of five primordial elements in their subtle form - sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. Finally, our physical body is made up of the same five cosmic elements in their gross form - space, air, fire, water and earth. Of course, there is the consciousness behind everything always. So, we are all made of the same five elements - we, the plants, the earth, the universe, everything.

### The Five Elements

We have all heard the wonderful explanation as to why the priest in the temple waves lamps, shows the conch containing water, waves a piece of cloth, offers a flower and, finally, waves the fly whisk (*chamara*) in front of the image. We have been told that these offerings symbolize the five elements which form the gross and subtle universe, and our gross and subtle bodies. The whole universe, the world, the trees and plants and mountains and rivers, and our 'coverings' have all been made of these five elements - space, air, fire, water and earth. Everything is made of these five elements. When we adore God by way of offering something as our loving gift to Him, we indeed offer these five elements symbolically; only the forms of our offerings may be different. Some may offer clothes, some food, some flowers - all

are made of the same five elements .

### The Identification

Thus we are now able to come to the fourth benefit of participating in evening vespers .As we said ,many devotees join the chorus ,some meditate ,some others pray ,still others repeat the mantra -there are many ways .One more possible way could be this: Even though we ourselves may not be performing arati to the Lord , we may derive the utmost benefit by identifying ourselves with the sacred act .Immediately before the vespers begin ,the prayer hall or the temple is all silent ,and preparations are going on for the ritual .The priest is in preparing to offer his adoration to Sri Ramakrishna ,Holy Mother and Swamiji .It is a moment of meditation .It is a moment to concentrate our minds .

Swami Vivekananda always insisted on our thinking that we are the *Atman*. “Constantly tell yourself ,‘I am not the body ,I am not the mind ,I am not thought ,I am not even consciousness; I am the *Atman*’.” (Complete Works ,Vol 8 ,*Jnana Yoga*) .We could benefit from this great teaching ,that we are the Self. When the priest begins to perform *arati* by showing five well lit lamps to Sri Ramakrishna , and when the hymn *khandana bhava bandhana* begins to enter the heart ,we may imagine it is we who are symbolically offering the ‘fire’ or the ‘form’ element to God .It is our five life forces that are being offered to God .It is as if the world is offering one of the five elements to the Lord in adoration . Next ,when he offers water in a conch ,we can try to be conscious that it is the ‘water’ element or the ‘taste’ element that we are offering to God .Then comes the piece of cloth that the priest offers .We can imagine that we are offering the ‘space’ or ‘sound’ element to Him .When the priest offers the flower ,we can imagine that it is the ‘earth’ or the ‘smell’ element that we are offering to God .Lastly ,when the priest waves the fly whisk we

can imagine that we are offering the 'air' or the 'touch' element to God .Thus ,though we personally did not perform the *arati* ,we fully participated in it ,mentally offering the five elements ,and thereby offering not only the elements ,but all that is made of these elements :including our physical ,subtle ,and the causal bodies to God .At the individual level as well as the at the collective level ,the law is the same ,according to our scriptures and Swamiji So ,when our ears are listening to the glorious music of *khandana bhava bandana* and when our eyes are filled with the beautiful vision of the *arati* to the Lord ,our minds are engaged in dedicating the five elements symbolically ,which have given form to both, the individual as well as the collective .

After the *arati* comes the salutation to the Lord Saints and scriptures are never tired of telling us to reduce our ego .Holy Mother says : "O man , surrender ! Surrender ! The act of surrender is a symbol of the utter helplessness of the soul and the faith in the benevolence of God So we offer ourselves at His feet . He knows best .The part is in complete surrender before the Whole .

### Act of Self Renewal

The *arati* is over now .We have offered our gross ,subtle and causal bodies to the Lord .And we offered ourselves to Him too .Nothing is ours; everything is His .There are two important points to note here .One; whatever we offer to God is pure and clean .So ,since we are offering ourselves to God often (as and when possible) we try to keep our minds and intentions pure .The Lord accepts our offerings ,says the *Bhagavad Gita* ,if they are offered with devotion and sincerity . Two; whatever is offered to God is pure; so we are becoming pure instantaneously .His things are always perfect and pure Anything that is offered to the Lord is pure .When we return home after *arati* and meditation in

the temple ,we have rejuvenated ,renewed and purified our system .

After a day's hard work after a gruelling life in the world , after concentrating for hours in the things of the world which are nothing but 'I' and 'mine' , we enter the temple Inside the temple of Sri Ramakrishna or Holy Mother or Swamiji ,in the serene atmosphere ,we sit in front of the Lord ,and forget 'I' and 'mine' but think of the *Atman* ,the real I .then we offer ourselves to Him in all humility ,purify our hearts with prayers ,listen to the wonderful songs ,look at the ignorance removing form of Sri Ramakrishna .Our symbolic mental offering of ourselves ,of our world ,of our universe ,to the Lord purifies us and we become rejuvenated personalities .We return home ,flying ,as it were , because the burden of the world is being lifted by His grace .

So ,a great process is going on inside the temples every day .We are being benefited immensely each day we participate in the *arati* .

Gradually ,this singular thing becomes a habit .Whatever strong influence we put on the mind becomes a habit .So the simple act of adoration of the Lord has a wonderful benefit . Therefore it is that all saints and scriptures taught us ,common people that we should visit holy places often .

### Cosmic Re vitalization

There are billions of souls on the earth . As Swami Vivekananda says :“... The Absolute is that ocean while you and I , and suns and stars and everything else are various waves of that ocean .And what makes the waves different ?Only the form and that form is time ,space and causation all entirely dependent on the wave .As soon as the wave goes ,they vanish .” (Complete Works , Vol . 2 , ‘The Absolute and Manifestation’) .There are millions of forms but all are one . Because ,the Absolute behind is

One .This is what Vivekananda teaches us ,and all the scriptures teach us too .We are one spiritually .Not only that ,our three bodies: the gross ,subtle and causal, as well as the universe are made up of the self same five elements .So just as spiritually we are the One Absolute ,even physically and mentally ,we are all one .So we are all one and one alone .This unity of existence is what *Vedanta* teaches us .

The path of devotion as taught by Sri Ramakrishna directs us too towards this One Absolute only ,called *Shakti* or Divine Mother .Therefore ,while we offer mentally the five cosmic elements which made our three forms of existence ,we are also at the same time offering symbolically the universal cosmic elements .Thoughts are powerful ,says Vivekananda ,and they can accomplish anything .While the priest performs arati ,there sits a devotee who is offering ,in all humility ,the five essential elements of the Lord's higher creative nature (*prakriti*) to Him as an offering .These elements have ,in their subtle and gross manifestations, created the living beings and the universe .So such thoughts can influence someone somewhere .Such thoughts can elevate the mind of someone somewhere .

Thus ,in the living presence of the Lord ,we can revitalize ourselves daily by just participating in the vesper services of the *ashramas* ,temples, prayer halls ,etc .A simple act of *arati* ,which may take anywhere between 5 to 15 minutes ,can bring about enormous change in our personalities; by bringing purity , energy , force , aspiration , goal-oriented lives , and enthusiasm .Thus there are endless benefits from spirituality □

## **Programme for September & October 2010**

Sunday discourses begin after a brief period of meditation.

At the

**Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre**, Bourne End at 4:30 pm

Tel: 01628 526464 - [www.vedantauk.com](http://www.vedantauk.com)

Sep	5	Imitation of Christ 5	Swami Shivarupananda
Sep	12	Imitation of Christ 6	Swami Shivarupananda
Sep	19	No Talk	
Sep	26	Imitation of Christ 7	Swami Shivarupananda
Oct	3	Imitation of Christ 8	Swami Shivarupananda
Oct	10	Imitation of Christ 9	Swami Shivarupananda
Oct	17	Durga Puja	
Oct	24	Selection from the Upanishads 4	Swami Dayatmananda
Oct	31	Day Retreat	

Durga Puja  
Sunday 17th October  
at Bourne End

### **Day Retreat**

With Swami Dayatmananda and Swami Shivarupananda at  
the Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, on 31<sup>th</sup> October  
from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm

Note: Children are not allowed at the Retreat.

Please bring (vegetarian) lunch to share.

### **Vedanta Study Circle in Cheshire Area**

Sep 19 at 11:00 am

The Paths of Sreya and Preya *Swami Shivarupananda*

Oct 17 at 11:00 am

The Lights of all Lights *Swami Shivarupananda*

For information contact Mr Aswani (tel: 01625 527075)

between 9:30 pm - 10:30 pm

*Thy company. Give me sincere and pure love for Thee.'*

*"Karmayoga is very hard indeed. In the Kaliyuga it is extremely difficult to perform the rites enjoined in the scriptures. Nowadays man's life is centred on food alone. He cannot perform many scriptural rites. Suppose a man is laid up with fever. If you attempt a slow cure with the old-fashioned indigenous remedies, before long his life may be snuffed out. He can't stand much delay. Nowadays the drastic 'D Gupta' mixture is appropriate. In the Kaliyuga the best way is bhaktiyoga, the path of devotion-singing the praises of the Lord, and prayer. The path of devotion alone is the religion for this age."*

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, October 27, 1882

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Be you holy and, above all, sincere; and do not for a moment give up your trust in the Lord, and you will see the light. Whatever is truth will remain for ever; whatever is not, none can preserve...

Whatever others think or do, lower not your standard of purity, morality, and love of God; above all, beware of all secret organizations. No one who loves God need fear any jugglery. Holiness is the highest and divinest power in earth and in heaven. "Truth alone triumphs, not untruth. Through truth alone is opened the way to God" (*Mundaka Upanishad*, III.i.6). Do not care for a moment who joins hands with you or not, be sure that you touch the hand of the Lord. That is enough.

*Swami Vivekananda*

