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SRI RAMAKRISHNA: The Path and the Goal

A religious person, a person who believes in the existence of God and strongly desires to realize God, needs to be clear about two things

1. What is God (Lakshya, Goal)
2. How to reach God (Patha, Path)

Some religious faiths teach that God is like a king who has the absolute power to punish or give rewards. Hence, the goal of these religious faiths is to appease God by following the instructions of His messengers.

Hence, it can be said that the followers of these religions should be God-fearing and obedient. This gives the assurance of a safe, happy life here and hereafter.

In Hinduism the goal of spiritual life is known as Tat (That) because it is consciousness. It has no gender. It is also called Satya (Truth) because it never changes. It is eternal.

The followers of the path of knowledge call their goal Brahman (the pure Consciousness).

The followers of the path of meditation (Yoga) call their goal the Paratma, the sum total of all individual selves.

The followers of the path of Tantra call their goal Shiva-Shakti, Consciousness and its power.

The followers of the path of devotion (Bhakti) call their goal Bhagavan, God with the power to create, sustain and dissolve.

Interestingly all these conceptions of the spiritual mingle in a unique personality, Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna is popularly known as Samanya Devata, the God of unity.

He realized the Supreme Brahman and declared, echoing the realizations of the sages of the Veda, "One and not Two is the basis of the many." It is accepted that the experience of Brahman cannot be expressed because it is a subjective experience—beyond space, time and causation.

It is also accepted that the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Itself. (Brahma-vid Brahma-eva

Bhavati). Hence, Sri Ramakrishna is the human form of Para-Brahman — the ultimate goal of the followers of the path of knowledge.

Sri Ramakrishna is also the path of the jnani. His simple way of teaching for the followers of the path of knowledge is, "Vicharya (Analyze) always in every moment what is real in this world." Everything is temporary — wealth, beauty, social recognition, power. Everything changes with time.

If we analyze this body, which we love so much and to which we are so attached, is nothing but a structure of bones, marrow, blood and filth. Should you waste your time on this. Think, O man, think. Through analysis your mind will ultimately reach the truth, the ultimate reality, Brahman, the source of eternity, knowledge and bliss eternal.

Sri Ramakrishna is the path and the goal for the jnanis.

Sri Ramakrishna is also considered to be the path and the goal of the yogis. Students of Sri Ramakrishna's biography are aware of his unique capacity for Samadhi. Samadhi is the ultimate goal for the yogis. In samadhi the individual consciousness merges with the Supreme Consciousness. By practicing meditation we withdraw all the sense organs from the sense objects, and the mind becomes tranquil. In that tranquil mind we realize the ultimate goal of all beings. Sri Ramakrishna was that totality, the Supreme Self, the goal of all yogis.

He is also the path of the yogis. He showed in his life how one should meditate, forgetting not only the external world but also one's own body consciousness.

One day, when Sri Ramakrishna was meditating, sitting like a stone image, a crooked-minded person put a burning charcoal on his shoulder expecting that he would jump out of his meditation and begin shouting for help. But nothing happened! Sri Ramakrishna had no reaction. His flesh was burning. The smell of that

burning flesh drew the attention of some people who came rushing, removed the charcoal and treated him.

Sri Ramakrishna used to teach that when you sat for meditation, you should forget that you were a living person. Think of yourself as a stone image and merge your consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness and enjoy the presence of the Supreme Self.

The Tantra teaches that Shiva is the source of Knowledge and creates through His own power, which is known as Kali. The union of Shiva and Shakti is the ultimate goal of the Tantra. Sri Ramakrishna's biography describes how Sri Ramakrishna practiced Tantra in all its details.

Many blessed ones saw Shiva and Kali in his person. We may recount one incident, which happened with Mathurnath Biswas, the owner of the Dakshineswar Temple. One day Mathurnath was sitting in a chair on the veranda of his house. He could see Ramakrishna pacing up and down on the veranda of his own room. As Ramakrishna walked in one direction, Mathur saw the image of Shiva, and when Ramakrishna walked in the other direction, he became Kali. At first Mathur could not believe his eyes. But he was wide-awake and it was broad daylight, Mathur realized the goal of the Tantras in Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna is also the path for the followers of Tantra. He taught again and again that as long as you are in the realm of duality, you have to accept Kali, the Divine Power.

His beloved disciple, the famous Swami Vivekananda, then the young man Narendranath, was reluctant to accept the Divine Power, Goddess Kali, but a time came when he was compelled to come to Sri Ramakrishna for help. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to go to Goddess Kali and pray to her. The students of the biography of Swami Vivekananda know the rest, Swami Vivekananda accepted the Shakti, Goddess Kali. Not only that, afterwards Swami Vivekananda himself, and many of his brother disciples acknowledged that in their spiritual experiences, they had realized Sri Ramakrishna as Goddess Kali. Sri Ramakrishna is the path and the goal of the Tantras.

Sri Ramakrishna's father, Kshudiram Chattopadhyay, went to visit Gaya, a very famous pilgrimage center of the Hindus, known as the abode of Lord Vishnu, the deity of the devotees. There he saw in a divine mood Lord Vishnu approaching him to be born as his son. Sri Ramakrishna is Lord Vishnu, the goal of the followers of the path of devotion.

Sri Ramakrishna is the path of the devotees too. His teachings to the devotees are:

1. Have faith in the existence of God
2. Be Sincere in your spiritual practices.
3. Reduce the attachment to worldly things
4. Cry like a baby cries for its mother to the Lord for His grace
5. Pray incessantly

Sri Ramakrishna is the path and the goal for all spiritual aspirants.



"One can ascend to the top of a house by means of a ladder or a bamboo or a staircase or a rope; so too, diverse are the ways of approaching God, and each religion in the world shows one of the ways.... A truly religious man should think that other religions are also so many paths leading to the Truth. One should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions."

-- Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna: An Embodiment of Yoga

Swami Shivamayananda

Revered Vice President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

The article is based on the talk delivered during the Kalpataru Day retreat via zoom on January 1, 2021.

ॐ स्थापकाय च धर्मस्य सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे ।
अवतारवरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

In this hymn of *pranama*, which Swami Vivekananda composed on Sri Ramakrishna, I want to emphasize the point सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे He (Sri Ramakrishna) was an embodiment of all *dharmas* and that includes the being the embodiment of yoga. At the same time he was अवतारवरिष्ठ. His yogic part we shall see.

When he was born, he slipped into an oven full of ashes and there his body got smeared with ashes and that is an indication that he was a born yogi.

Afterwards, we find that he was growing as a special child, and he was an apple of eye of all the villagers. Once, while walking along a paddy field and having puffed rice in a basket — possibly his age was about seven — He marked, the sky is full of dark cloud, and all of a sudden a flight of (white) cranes moved in a formation on the background of the dark cloud. The contrast was so beautiful and his mind so absorbed (in it) that his puffed rice fell down and he also fell down (unconscious of the outer world). Afterwards he said that he did not have any disease, that he was very happy and he had enjoyment inside. Whenever he had this sort of an experience — many times he had this sort of an experience — he felt that it was a very happy and very enjoyable experience.

At another time, he was acting as Shiva in a drama and he became so absorbed that, again, he lost his outward consciousness. His mind was so absorbed that he did not have any body consciousness and it was very enjoyable.

When he used to start the work of the priest, as he would go to the shrine, he would see a Bhairava sitting on the Naatmandir and he determined

(with himself): “I shall sit erect without any movement”, and his joints, from leg upwards, became almost locked as he heard the sound *tatak-tak*. He could only move his body *after* his worship was over. That is another expression about his speciality in Yoga.



Once his absorption in God was so intense, burning charcoal fell on his body but he did not feel any pain. He was unaware of any pain. There was a burn, there was the wound. The wound had to be cured with application of medicines but at the time of the burning coal, he was not aware of any burning sensation.

In the famous and well-known hymn which Swami Vivekananda composed on Sri Ramakrishna, which is sung in the evenings, खण्डन भव बन्धन जग वन्दन वन्दि तोमाय, in its 7th line we come across the line जृम्भित युग ईश्वर जगदीश्वर योगसहाय.

जृम्भित means manifest. What was manifesting?

God of the universe manifested himself as the God of the Era, God of the Age. And then निरोधन, समाहित-मन, निरखि तव कृपाय. In the Gita in the 11th chapter we come across Krishna speaking to Arjuna when Arjuna was eager to see his cosmic form विश्वरूप. Krishna said :

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुम् अनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।

दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥

so absorbed that he could see this divine drama, this cosmic drama, that God of the universe is

transforming himself into God of the Era, God of the Age.

Sri Ramakrishna was a perfect Yogin. However (we see that) his yoga included both, the Pātanjala Yoga and the Tantra Yoga. In Sri Ramakrishna's yoga, there is the Kundalini. In the Patanjala yoga, there is no Kundalini. In the Tantras, Kundalini is there. And he (Sri Ramakrishna) could arouse the Kundalini of his disciples even by singing songs.

We know about his young disciple Kali Prasad, who later became Swami Abhedananda — his learning practical yoga. After seeing him (Kali Prasad) Sri Ramakrishna remarked: "You were a yogi in your previous birth and a little was incomplete. That portion will be completed in this birth. Then Sri Ramakrishna made him sit on a cot and wrote something on his tongue and Kali Prasad went into deep *samadhi*. Afterwards Sri

Ramakrishna touched him on chest and he came out of his *samadhi*. Gradually Kali became a complete yogi.

About Sri Ramakrishna it is said — Swami Vivekananda has said that Sri Ramakrishna, with his prayers, aroused the *Brahma-kundalini* so that it will be easier for everyone in this era to become a yogi.

On this very auspicious day — the new year's day — I pray to Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna that all of you, everyone, be blessed — as he (Sri Ramakrishna) prayed on that very day, on the Kalpataru Day, for everyone: "What shall I say, I pray that everyone be illumined" ("*Tomāder ki ār boli? Ami tomāder sakalke āshiroād kori. Tomāder sakaler Chaitanya hok*"). I pray that in everyone's life that prayer be fulfilled.

Thank you



This picture was taken in front of the Krishna temple at Dakshineswar in 1884, when Sri Ramakrishna was 48 years old. At the beginning Sri Ramakrishna did not agree with the idea of taking this photograph. The Master just went away near the Radhakanta [Krishna] temple.

Swami Nirvanananda said, "In the meantime Narendra arrived on the scene and heard everything; he said, 'Wait a bit. I shall put everything straight.' Saying this, he went to the veranda to the west of the Radhakanta temple where Sri Ramakrishna was sitting and started a religious conversation with him. The Master went into *samadhi*. Swamiji ... ordered them to get ready quickly to take the picture.

"In the state of *samadhi* the Master's body was bent on one side and therefore the cameraman went to make him sit erect by softly adjusting his chin. But as soon as he touched his chin the whole body of the Master came up like a piece of paper — so light it was! ... The Master was completely unaware of this incident."

Seeing the printed copy of the photo the Master remarked: "This represents a high yogic state. This form will be worshipped in every home as time goes on."

When Sri Ramakrishna saw the photo he went into ecstasy and touched the photo to his head several times, saying: "The photo is nicely taken. This mood is very high — fully merged in Him. Here the Lord is fully depicted in his own nature."

Sri Sarada Devi said: "I kept the photograph with the pictures of other gods and goddesses and worshipped it. At one time I lived on the ground floor of the nahabat. One day the Master came there, and at the sight of the picture he said, 'Hello, what is all this?' Lakshmi and I had been cooking under the staircase. Then I saw the Master take in his hand the bel leaves and flowers kept there for worship, and offer them to the photograph. This is the same picture."

Source: vedantastl.org/product/shrine-pose-of-sri-ramakrishna/

Sri Ramakrishna: Embodiment of Vedanta

Swami Jyotirupananda

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The article is based on the talk delivered during the Kalpataru Day retreat via zoom on January 1, 2021.

I bow to the magnanimous all-pervading Vishnu who has no beginning, middle or end and is birthless. He is free from growth and decay and is immutable, *achyuta*. He is the great cause of all causes.

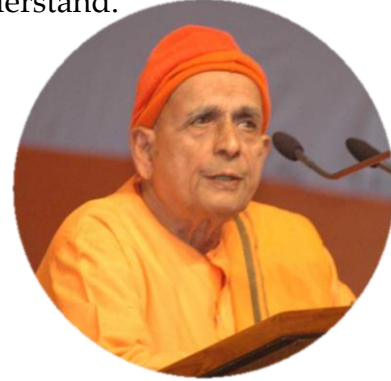
Dear Swami Ishatmanandaji, friends, and admirers of Sri Ramakrishna. I am glad that I have been invited here to speak on "Sri Ramakrishna: The Embodiment of Vedanta." Frankly speaking, I am not competent either in the subject of Ramakrishna or of Vedanta. Still, following Swami Vivekananda, I shall try to speak whatever little I know. Swami Vivekananda's famous hymn in Sanskrit, perhaps all of you know, "*ācaṇḍālā-pratihatarayo yasya prema-pravāho*". From this hymn I shall take up two shlokas, couplets, and try to explain about Sri Ramakrishna.

*śakti-samudra-samutthata-raṅgam
darśita-prema-vijṛmbhita-raṅgam
samśaya-rākṣasa-nāśa-mahāstram
yāmi gurum śaraṇam bhava-vaidyam*

Swami Vivekananda offered his obeisance to his guru Sri Ramakrishna, who is the physician of all worldly sufferings and transmigrations. He said that Sri Ramakrishna is the "*śakti-samudra-samutthata-raṅgam*", i.e., he is a huge wave in the ocean of universal energy, called Shakti. Huge wave means he is a wave of Shakti. So, he has come in human form as an avatara, incarnation, of Shakti. Our common idea of avataras is that they originate from Vishnu, but Vishnu is all pervading, immutable. In that sense there is no question of transforming into the incarnation. So, the incarnation originates from Shakti, because Shakti is the source of creation, maintenance and dissolution. She herself can take up the form of a human being, and that is the avatara.

The immutable Vishnu is Brahman. Brahman

does not transform into an avatara. But Sri Ramakrishna did not say that Brahman and Shakti are two separate entities. He said there is no difference between the two. A snake coiled up or a snake in movement is essentially the same snake in two states. Similarly, Sri Ramakrishna points that whomever we call Brahman, he calls 'my mother Kali'. So, we can take an idea that Mother Kali wanted to teach humanity how to get out of worldly sufferings and worked through Ramakrishna. Kali is working through Ramakrishna. That is the idea of Ramakrishna as far as I understand.



Now, let us go to the topic of Vedanta. Ramakrishna was the embodiment of Vedanta. What does the word Vedanta mean? It means "Veda", i.e., "essence" and "anta", i.e., "end", so it has two meanings. Actually, it is the end part of the Vedic literature. There are two divisions to the Vedic literature, mantras and brahmanas. The Brahmanas include Aranyakas, i.e., forest literature. Sages went to the forest, did their practice and attained realization. Now, the end part of these Aranyakas is the Upanishads. These Upanishads are the portion which we call Vedanta, because all the Upanishads, except one or two, are at the end of the Vedas. That's why it is called Vedanta, and it also contains eternal truths, which are the essence of the Vedanta. So in that way we understand this Vedanta to be the Upanishads and

their commentaries. Since Vedanta is a revelation of truth, it was given a philosophical form by Veda Vyasa, which is called Brahma Sutra or Vedanta Sutra.

The Brahma Sutra, Upanishads, and the Bhagawad Gita, spoken by Lord Krishna about 5000 years ago, constitute the main literature of Vedanta. This Vedanta, the revelation of truth received in the pure, transparent minds of the ancient sages, was orally transmitted from generation to generation, from guru to shishya, teacher to disciple. The Upanishads are called Srutis because they were an oral teaching. Commentaries existed in ancient times, but these most ancient commentaries are mostly lost. Later at the time of Shankaracharya, these Vedantic truths were again revealed as realized by the acharya.

After Shankaracharya also there were other teachers, realized saints, who provided commentaries. Thereby we have commentaries with different interpretations of the supreme reality, of God, of the universe and souls. Difference of opinions was a problem about 1,000 years back. Shankaracharya came and interpreted Vedanta as non-dual. The idea is that the supreme reality, which is Brahman, is one and one only; and this world, the universe which we perceive, is simply an appearance, not real; and all souls are identical with Brahman. They are not separate entities. That is why this oneness of the supreme reality, as propagated by Acharya Shankaracharya, is called non-dual Vedanta.

In the 11th century came another great saint, Ramanuja Acharya. His interpretation, his realization, differed from Shankaracharya. He also accepted that God is one and one only, but there are inner divisions. As we have a soul, in this universe the soul is God. The universe is his body and all individuals are cells in that body. In that sense it is one; so, it is called qualified non-dualism. Then came Madhava and other saints. They stated that God is one reality, the universe is one reality and souls are another reality. So, it is

called dualistic Vedanta, but universe and souls are under full control of God. The goal of life and the methods of practice differ in all these three cases.

Now what about Sri Ramakrishna? Sri Ramakrishna taught his disciples in many different ways according to their capacity to receive. Swami Vivekananda was taught in one way. Mahendranath Gupta was in the company of Sri Ramakrishna for a long time and was taught in another way. Sri Ramakrishna's other monastic disciples like Swami Brahmananda and others were also taught slightly differently than Swami Vivekananda. Once a discussion arose between Swami Brahmananda and Mahendranath Gupta. Mahendranath Gupta fervently believed that qualified non-dualism is the real teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. The example of the bel fruit that Sri Ramakrishna gave is probably known to most of you. Ramakrishna said that if you want to get the full weight of the fruit, then you have to take all parts of the bel fruit, i.e., its outer shell, its mucus, seeds, etc., all together to make a complete bel fruit.

So, that is the idea of qualified non-dualism, and Mahendranath Gupta was taught in that way. He believed it was the real teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. But Swami Brahmananda and others were taught in another way. Swami Brahmananda did not agree with Mahendranath Gupta and said that Brahman is one and one only and this world is under the spell of Maya. Well, no solution came out of this discussion. This incident happened in Banaras. Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, was at the time living in Banaras and one Brahmachari was sent to Holy Mother to ask her for her decision on the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. Mother Sarada Devi told very clearly that Sri Ramakrishna was Advaita, i.e., non-dualistic, and you, his followers, are all Advaita. When Mahendranath Gupta heard this, he thought Mother's decision was the best decision, so he too accepted this.

Sri Ramakrishna practiced all types of sadhanas and found that God can be realized in a

dualistic way, can be realized in a qualified non-dualistic way and finally in an advaitic, non-dualistic way. Ramakrishna had clear experiences of all the stages. He found that even those who have realized God in a dualistic form, i.e., God is one and I am one, they too have their solution of life, all their sufferings removed, and are filled with divine bliss. But if they go still deeper, they will reach the same goal that God is all pervading and is one and there is no other. So, he taught that these are the steps of realization. All are true, but you have to go through different stages, and the final stage is that God is non-dual. There is no other, the world is simply an appearance and *Jiva Brahmaiva na aparah*, i.e., "every individual is nothing but an expression of Brahman."

From Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Ma we get this conclusion that Man is Divine. That is the Vedic truth, reasserted by Sarada Ma and Sri Ramakrishna, that Man is basically Divine and secondly, the universe is one. This universe is one, just an appearance of the homogenous, infinite Brahman and third, Unity of forms of God. God is one. He may appear in different ways to satisfy his votaries, the name and form may be different, but God is one and one only and then finally there is only the one. Thereby we can find harmony of religions.

Every religion comes from the saints and prophets. They are all true. If you sincerely take up any path, you will reach the same goal, same God. That is the teaching of Advaita Vedanta. All these

appear combined in Sri Ramakrishna. Another shloka I would like to share is this: *advaya-tattva-samāhita-cittam projjvala-bhakti-paṭāvṛtaṛttam | karma-kalevaram-adbhuta-ceṣṭam yāmi gurum śaraṇam bhava-vaidyam.*

Here Swami Vivekananda said that in Sri Ramakrishna this non-dual vedantic truth was his most common experience, since most of the time Sri Ramakrishna was immersed in Samadhi. Knowledge and the truth of religion can only be transmitted to others through love, and Ramakrishna's life is full of *projjvala-bhakti-paṭāvṛtaṛttam*, i.e., all the activities of Ramakrishna were based on great love.

Ramakrishna did not discard activities. He used to take rest for two hours, at best, and the rest of the time he was engaged in work. Work! What type of work—transmitting religion to others. Whoever came in the orbit of Sri Ramakrishna used to be blessed by the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. Day and night he used to be engaged in this sphere of spirituality. That is why it is said his body is full of karma that it is *karma-kalevaram-adbhuta-ceṣṭam*. His teachings are spreading all over the world in an imperceptible way and the results are slowly coming out. That is why his activities are called *adbhuta-ceṣṭam*, i.e., the unique process through which he used to teach humanity. That is the guru Sri Ramakrishna; Vivekananda's guru and guru of all.

Thank you all!



But some people live in the world even after attaining jnana. They see both what is inside and what is outside the room. The light of God illumines the world. Therefore with that light they can discriminate between good and bad, permanent and impermanent. The ignorant, who lead a worldly life without knowing God, are like people living in a house with mud walls. With the help of a dim light they can see the inside of the house but nothing more. But those who live in the world after having attained Knowledge and realized God, are like people living in a glass house. They see the inside of the room and also all that is outside. The light from the sun of Knowledge enters strongly into the room. They perceive everything inside the room very clearly. They know what is good and what is bad, what is permanent and what is impermanent.

-- Sri Ramakrishna

BHAGAVATA (4) : *Mother Kunti's Prayer to Sri Krishna*

Swami Ishatmananda

Bhagavan Sri Krishna displayed His divine power by protecting the Pancha Pandavas with His mighty weapon, Sudarsana chakra. And protected their grandson through His yogic power, covering the fetus within Uttara at the same time. He did that easily!

Vyasa commented, "There is nothing to wonder at in this performance of Him who is unborn, unchanging Being. He Himself is the wonder of all wonders because He creates, preserves and dissolves everything through His Maya Shakti."

Suta said to the eager Rishis, "Thereafter, wishing good wishes to the Pandavas, Sri Krishna with Satyaki and Uddhava was about to climb into His chariot to go to Dwarka. Then Kunti Devi along with and other ladies came near and in a sweet voice began her prayer to Sri Krishna.

Among the Five Great Pious Queens is highly respected as an excellent Mother of Krishna is Kunti's brother's son. Even then Kunti began saying,

"I salute the original Being, the Supreme Person, the one transcending Prakriti, Lord of all. (Though you are within and without all beings, none can see you directly).

Why can't people see God? Because He is covered by Maya and also beyond the senses. He is changeless spirit.

In the 4th chapter 9th sloka of the Gita, Sri Krishna states, "He who understands the truth about Me — My birth and work — he will not be born again after death because he will merge in Me, God."

Devi Kunti is not claiming that she has understood the truth about God. Rather, she humbly said, "O Krishna, even the Munis, those who are constantly pondering over you—the pure souls free from anger, etc. cannot understand you. Hence you teach them to connect with you through

divine love, Bhakti,. How can I, an ordinary lady understand you? (1/8/19)."

Mother Kunti, in gratitude for all the help Krishna had given to her and to her sons, prayed, "O Krishna, only through your grace my sons were able to save themselves from Poison, Burning, Gambling, Exile, the weapons of their enemies in the battle of Kkurukshetra, and now from the Brahmastra released by Ashwatthama. I am thankful and humble."

Then Mother Kunti uttered a unique prayer: "O Teacher of the world, I pra that danger will always befall us."

Why? "So that we may feel the presence of you, O Krishna, whose vision bestows freedom from rebirth."

This is the special uniqueness of Hinduism: Mother Kunti was worshipping through words, Sri Krishna, who was standing by the side of His chariot and smiling, but Kunti through the personal God was meditating on the infinite, impersonal Being. "I consider you as Time, Spirit, Beginningless, Endless, Irresistible, Equal to every one—only you are able to give salvation to the soul."

In the Gita, Sri Krishna clearly declared, "I do not curse, I do not bless, I have no preference, no favoritism."

Understanding this truth clearly Mother Kunti said, "O Lord, no one can understand the real intentions of your sportive actions, which you do in your incarnations. None is special to you. All your actions as an Incarnation are only to redeem the jivas. Without understanding this, by mistake people attribute partiality to you. (1/8/28)."

In the 29th verse, Kunti said, "No one can clearly understand why you take birth—different people explain differently. Some say that in a previous birth prayed to get you as their son so as they got

you.

Others say that Brahma, the first born, prayed to you to save the earth from being steeped in sin. In the Gita Bhagavan Himself said, "The deluded people can not truly understand 'Me' in human form..."

Mother Kunti gives her own explanation of why the Supreme Being takes human form. She said, "It is those who always hear about, recite, praise, remember and delight in your actions that quickly

attain you Liberation."

To get liberation one should completely give the mind to God. Hence, Mother Kunti is praying a unique prayer, "O Lord of all! O, Soul of all! O All-formed! Cut my attachment to my family (Pandavas) and my clan (Yadavas) so that I can meditate on you and you alone.

What happened after her prayer? Vyasa reported that Bhagavan Sri Krishna cast his bewitching smile on Kunti.

BHAGAVATA (5) : *Great Bhishma Reveals Sri Krishna's Divinity*

The Supreme God, who took birth as Sri Krishna, intended to continue as a human being through Kunti, the blessed mother of the great Pandavas, who realized the true nature of Krishna and offered her prayer before everyone. God blessed her with His smile but continued His Lila or Divine Play. As was the custom, Sri Krishna entered Hastinapura and took leave of Kunti, Suvadra, Uttara and other women and became ready to leave for Dwarka.

Then King Yudhishtira prayed with great love to Sri Krishna to stay back for some more days.

But why?

Because Yudhishtira had become overwhelmed with grief for the loss of most of his kinsmen. Slokas 48-52 of Skanda1, chapter 8 describe how bitterly Yudhishtira lamented, thinking that he had committed sin.

With a voice choked with emotion, he burst out saying, "Alas! What a fool I am! What an evil mind do I have! I did not think before that I would be killing the 18 Akshauhini. And, why did I kill so many people? For this body which will turn into food for the jackals and dogs. Shame on me!"

In his commentary Sridhar Swami gave an account of *Akshauhini* soldiers:

21,870	Chariots (soldiers fighting on chariots)
21,870	Elephants (soldiers fighting on elephants)
65,610	Calvary (soldiers fighting on

horseback)

109,350

Foot Soldiers

218,700

Total Soldiers = one Akshauhini

x18

3,936,600

Soldiers killed by Yudhishtira

Yudhishtira was a king, a Kshatriya whose righteous duty was to fight for a right cause, and he did exactly that, but in his subconscious mind he was feeling guilty. Why? Because he was completely deluded by affection for his kinsmen.

Great personalities like Vyasa and Sri Krishna tried to explain things and console him, but Yudhishtira paid no heed to their words. He went on lamenting, "Oh! I am not going to be liberated from hell even after thousands and thousands of years because I have slain friends, relatives, brothers, teachers and have indirectly slain women and children."

In that mood Yudhishtira even praised Duryodhana, "Oh! He was a good benevolent king. He used to take care of his subjects. I have killed him just for my greed for the kingdom."

Not getting solace in the words of Vyasa and Krishna or even the scriptures, Yudhishtira decided to visit the great Bhishma.

Hero among heroes, Bhishma was waiting for his death lying on a bed of arrows. Yudhishtira was afraid of hell because of the mass killing, and he wanted to know the details about religion.

When Ydhishthira decided to visit Bhishma in Kurukshetra, his brothers, brahmanas, Vyasa, and others followed him. Sri Krishna and Arjuna also accompanied the party in their famous chariot.

Upon seeing the great assemblage, the pious Bhishma, who was well versed in the knowledge of duties and manners, paid them due honors. Seeing Sri Krishna, Bhishma became extremely happy. He was aware of Sri Krishna's divine nature. Seeing him in human form, sitting with the Pandavas to listen to a discourse about Dharma, Bhishma began to shed tears. Bhishma, the Knower of Dharma, seeing his chosen deity, who resides in the heart, standing before him in the form of Sri Krishna, mentally worshipped Him.

Srimad Bhagaatam expounders are of the opinion that King Yudhishtira's delusion and emotional outburst all happened because of Sri Krishna's divine play. Not understanding the true nature of Krishna, Yudhishtira rejected his advice, but rather wanted to have guidance from Bhishma.

Sri Krishna perhaps wanted this to happen for two reasons:

1. The pious Bhishma was constantly praying to have his darshan, his blessing in person before leaving his body.
2. To make the world know the truth about the Divine Avatar.

Along with Yudhishtira, all the contemporary famous personalities were present: Leaders of the Kurus, a great number of Rishis, Brahmans, Sages, the knowers of the Vedas—Narada, Parvata, Dhomya, Bharadvaja, Parasurama with his disciples, Vasishtha, Gautama, Atri, Viswamitra, Kasyapa, Angiras, and the great Suka, the son of Vyasa.

Sri Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, the Supreme God, wanted that these great minds should understand, accept, and also propagate the conception of the Avatar. The nature of God is clear in His (Krishna's) Avatar. As Lord Jesus said, "He who has seen the Son has seen the Father."

Bhishma was widely revered. When

Yudhishtira and his group of followers approached him, Bhishma said, "What a tragedy, what a travesty of justice, that you, who have always had holy men, the laws of righteousness, and the Supreme Being Himself as your guide in life still had to spend your life in such utter misery and could not understand Krishna.

Then Bhishma consoled him saying, "O King! None can know the will of the Supreme Being. Not even the far-sighted Rishis who have tried their best to fathom the divine mind."

"Everything goes according to the will of the Supreme. Hence, you just perform your duties perfectly and be free."

Then Bhishma clearly stated, "This Krishna is Narayana, God in person, the origin of all. He is now enacting His divine play, appearing incognito as one among the Vrishnis, and hiding His real nature from the world at large—God, the Soul of all, even-sighted, non-dual, devoid of egoism and free from all taints, never feeling humiliation or elation."

Then Bhishma, crying in joy, said, "O King, did you notice that just to fulfill my prayer, my Lord has come to me in person as Krishna."

The great Bhishma was getting ready to leave his body and was praying for God to be present at the moment of his death. Bhishma was convinced that if one died keeping his mind steadfast on God and repeating His holy name, then that person after death would become free from all desires and get mukti.

Getting the hint, Yudhishtira asked Bhishma, who was resting on a bed of arrows, many questions relating to virtue within the hearing of the assembled Rishis. The Truth Knower, Bhishma, then expounded with illustrations drawn from ancient traditions a variety of themes:

1. **Duties of men in general**
2. **Duties according to Varna (caste)**
3. **Duties according to Ashrama (stage of life)**
4. **Code of conduct for worldly prosperity**
5. **Code of conduct for spiritual salvation**
6. **Rules of Charity**

7. Kingly duties

8. Duties of seekers of liberation

9. Duties of Women

About Bhishma, Sri Krishna said, "O Bhishma, you are laden with experience, you are an expert in the Bhishma had been lying on the bed of arrows for 28 days. On the 29th day Yudhishtira visited him. Bhishma's reply to Yudhishtira's questions has been recorded at length in the Mahabharata from the 56th chapter of the *Shanti Parvato* the 167th chapter of the *Anushasana Parva*.

In the Bhagavatam it has only been mentioned in brief. Bhishma's replies were heard not only by Yudhishtira but also by the many Rishis who were with him. These teachings spread throughout society and became the social customs in India.

General duties of men: Following the rules of the country supporting the king when necessary, paying the taxes, etc.

Duties according to Varna: it proves that the caste system was in vogue at the time of the Mahabharata. However, caste used to be decided according to the capacity and quality of the person.

Brahmana Dharma: In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna described the qualities of the Brahman:

"Serenity, control of the senses, austerity, purity, straight-forwardness, knowledge, insight, and faith in the Supreme Being—these are the Brahman's duties."

Kshatriya Dharma: Prowess, boldness, fortitude, dexterity, not flying from battle, generosity, and sovereignty were the duties of the Kshatriya.

Vaishya Dharma: Agriculture, cattle rearing, and trade were the duties of the Vaishyas.

Shudra Dharma: Service was the duty of the Shudras.



Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna: The very same Existence-Consciousness-Bliss

In 1870 the Master went on a pilgrimage to Nadia, the birth-place of Sri Chaitanya. As the boat by which he travelled approached the sand-bank close to Nadia, Sri Ramakrishna had a vision of the "two brothers", Sri Chaitanya and his companion Nityananda, "bright as molten gold" and with haloes, rushing to greet him with uplifted hands. "There they come! There they come!" he cried. They entered his body and he went into a deep trance.

In Sri Ramakrishna's word, "The other day... I saw Satcidananda come out of this sheath [i.e. his own body.] It said, 'I incarnate Myself in every age.' I thought that I myself was saying these words out of mere fancy. I kept quiet and watched. Again Satcidananda Itself spoke, saying 'Chaitanya too worshipped Shakti'."

While talking to M. at the Baranagore monastery after the passing away of his Master, Swami Vivekananda said, "... on innumerable occasions the Master said to me: In me alone are embodied Advaita, Chaitanya and Nityananda. I am all these three."

In Sri Ramakrishna's words, "Chaitanya, Consciousness, is awakened after Advaita-jnana, the Knowledge of the non-dual Brahman. Then one perceives that God alone exists in all beings as Consciousness. After this realization comes Ananda, Bliss. Advaita, Chaitanya, and Nityananda.

Excerpts from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

Introduction to the Cover Page: *Deus ex Machina*

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Aristotle was the first to use a Greek term equivalent to the Latin phrase *deus ex machina* "A god from a machine." Originally the technique was used in Greek drama where an unexpected power or event saved an apparently hopeless situation, especially as a artificial plot device in a play or novel. It was used not only to resolve an otherwise irresolvable plot situation, but also to surprise the audience, to bring the tale to a happy ending, or act as a comedic device.

Aeschylus introduced the idea ancient to Greek theater, where actors who were playing gods were brought onto stage using a machine. The machine could be either a crane (mechane) used to lower actors from above or a riser which brought them up through a trapdoor.

Other than the theatrical application stating in the 20th century it started to have conflict with different philosophies of religions. For example the idea of free will of the aspirant plays a vital role in Christianity and a sudden unexplained solution from "interfering" Gods and Goddesses became somewhat unacceptable. Philosophically speaking, Hinduism is founded on the theories of karma and rebirth and those are used to resolve many situations; still *deus ex machina* is also available in the stories of the puranas.

This cover story is an attempt to look for a non-traditional interpretation of the literal meaning of the phrase --- *deus ex machina* "A god from a machine" -- through the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. After all this creation is often referred by Sri Ramakrishna as "leela" or play or theater.

In Sanskrit "machine, contraption" is called Yantra. It literally means a mystical diagram, mainly from the tantric traditions. The earliest example of yantra, found in India, is dated to

25,000 - 20,000 BCE.

In Rigvedic Sanskrit, it meant an instrument for restraining or fastening, a prop, support or barrier, etymologically from the root *yam* "to sustain, support" and the *-tra* suffix expressing instruments. According to the ancient Indian medical terminology it refers to blunt surgical instruments such as tweezers or a vice.

It is important to remember yantras contain mantras, the Sanskrit syllables that are believed to exert their influence by means of sound-vibrations and are "thought forms" representing divinities. That divinity is hidden in the body-yantra-bound soul also – in Swami Vivekananda's words "each soul is potentially divine."

In the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna we find he mentioned various instruments to exemplify various stages and signs of spiritual life. Linguistically it is seen that from 17th to 19th century the word machine used as "a vehicle; a stage- or mail-coach; a ship", and also ship, car or carriages were used in Sri Ramakrishna's examples, but not all of those are covered to maintain contextual consistency.

Let us begin with two sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, where Sri Ramakrishna is indicating both machine and instrument interchangeably using the word *yantra*.

On Sunday, April 9, 1882 he is saying, "What is knowledge? And what is the nature of this ego? 'God alone is the Doer, and none else' - that is knowledge. I am not the doer; I am a mere instrument in His hand. Therefore I say: 'O Mother, Thou art the Operator and I am the machine. Thou art the Indweller and I am the house. Thou art the Driver and I am the carriage. I move as Thou movest me. I do as Thou makest me do. I speak as Thou makest me speak. Not I, not I, but Thou, but Thou'."

Another time he is telling, "...those whose spiritual consciousness has been awakened, who have realized that God alone is real and all else illusory, cherish a different ideal. They are aware that God alone is the Doer and others are His instruments."

It was on Saturday, May 24, 1884. Probably sometime after the *phalaharini Kali Puja*. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch in his room. In connection with the special worship of Kali a theatrical performance had been staged. In the morning the actors came to his room to pay him their respects. Sri Ramakrishna was engaged in conversation with the hero of the play in a happy mood. The hero was an expert musician also. Therefore, to explain to him the nature of God – with or without form, Sri Ramakrishna is using a musical instrument as an example.

"Yes, both are true" says Sri Ramakrishna, "God with form is as real as God without form. Do you know what describing God as being formless only is like? It is like a man's playing only a monotone on his flute, though it has seven holes. But on the same instrument another man plays different melodies. Likewise, in how many ways the believers in a Personal God enjoy Him! They enjoy Him through many different attitudes: the serene attitude, the attitude of a servant, a friend, a mother, a husband, or a lover."

Sri Ramakrishna extended this example to Keshab and the others devotees one afternoon. They heard the music from the *nahabat* in the temple garden. Sri Ramakrishna was talking about the paths of Knowledge and devotion. He illustrated, "Do you hear how melodious that music is? One player is producing only a monotone on his flute, while another is creating waves of melodies in different ragas and raginis. That is my attitude. Why should I produce only a monotone when I have an instrument with seven holes? Why should I say nothing but, 'I am He, I am He'? I want to play various melodies on my instrument with seven holes.



Why should I say only, 'Brahma! Brahma!'? I want to call on God through all the moods—through *santa*, *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya*, and *madhur*. I want to make

merry with God. I want to sport with God."

Keshab, the great Brahmo leader and one of the great personalities of society of that time, listened to these words with wonder in his eyes and said to the Brahmo devotees, "I have never before heard such a wonderful and beautiful interpretation of *jnana* and *bhakti*."

The Brahmo devotees of 19th century Bengal were intellectually profound in scriptural knowledge. Some of them used to visit Sri Ramakrishna, who was the embodiment of scriptures, for spiritual discussion. One of them asked, "If it is God that makes me do everything, then I am not responsible for my sins."

Sri Ramakrishna answered with a smile, "Yes, *Duryodhana* also said that. 'O Krishna, I do what Thou, seated in my heart, makest me do.' If a man has the firm conviction that God alone is the Doer and he is His instrument, then he cannot do anything sinful. He who has learnt to dance correctly never makes a false step. One cannot even believe in the existence of God until one's heart becomes pure."

Another day a musician wanted to know more about, "It is God alone who is both the 'instrument' and the 'cause' in the context of *Duryodhana's* saying to Krishna. Sri Ramakrishna explained: "Yes, that is true. It is God alone who acts through us. He is the Doer, undoubtedly, and man is His instrument. But it is also true that an action cannot fail to produce its result. Your stomach will certainly burn if you eat hot chilli. It is God who has ordained that chilli will burn your stomach. If you commit a sin, you must bear its fruit. But one who has attained perfection, realized God, cannot commit sin. An expert singer cannot sing a false note.."

The main instrument for intense spiritual practice is mind. The purpose of this practice is to attain the state of yoga. What exactly is the state of yoga? Sri Ramakrishna defines, "Again, take a pair of scales for example. If a weight is placed on one side, the lower needle moves away from the upper one. The lower needle is the mind, and the upper one, God. The meeting of the two is yoga.

"Unless the mind becomes steady there cannot be

yoga. It is the wind of worldliness that always disturbs the mind, which may be likened to a candle flame. If that flame doesn't move at all, then one is said to have attained yoga."

A perfect alignment comes by constantly taking the name of God. "Why, is the name a trifling thing? God is not different from His name. Satyabhama tried to balance Krishna with gold and precious stones, but could not do it. Then Rukmini put a tulsi-leaf with the name of Krishna on the scales. That balanced the Lord." The power of God's name is tremendous. That aligns mind with God. In Sri Ramakrishna's words, "God is not different from His name."



Sri Ramakrishna used this balance instrument once again to give us a very powerful example to make us understand the state of yoga. "A small balance has two needles, the upper and the lower. The mind is the lower needle. I was always afraid lest the mind should move away from the upper needle-God. Further,

I would see a man always sitting by me with a trident in his hand. He threatened to strike me with it if the lower needle moved away from the upper one."

Maya or ignorance is the obstacle. As long as the ignorance is there, the understanding of machine and machine-user or operator is far away. Sri Ramakrishna explains, "The feeling of 'I' and 'mine' is ignorance. People say that Rani Rasmani built the Kali temple; but nobody says it was the work of God. They say that such and such a person established the Brahma Samaj; but nobody says it was founded through the will of God. This feeling, 'I am the doer', is ignorance. On the contrary, the idea, 'O God, Thou art the Doer and I am only an instrument; Thou art the Operator and I am the machine', is Knowledge. After attaining Knowledge a man says: 'O God, nothing belongs to me-neither this house of worship nor this Kali temple nor this Brahma Samaj. These are all Thine.

Wife, son, and family do not belong to me. They are all Thine.'

"To love these objects, regarding them as one's own, is maya [the cause of entanglement]. But to love all things is daya, compassion [the cause of God realization]. To love only the members of the Brahma Samaj or of one's own family is maya; to love one's own countrymen is maya. But to love the people of all countries, to love the members of all religions, is daya. Such love comes from love of God, from daya."

To have love for all, one has to realize God first. Sri Ramakrishna advised Sambhu Mallick, a famous philanthropist of that time, "Whatever you may do, you must always remember that the aim of this life of yours is the attainment of God ... God alone is real and all else unreal. Furthermore, after realizing God one feels that He alone is the Doer and we are but His instruments. Then why should we forget Him and destroy ourselves by being involved in too many activities? After realizing Him, one may, through His grace, become His instrument in building many hospitals and dispensaries.... Therefore I say again that work is only the first step. It can never be the goal of life. Devote yourself to spiritual practice and go forward...."

It is important to perform all services with an attitude that all actions are really being done as his instrument only. The writer of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, M., was the Principal of a school and brought many young boys to Sri Ramakrishna. One such pure soul was Purna. When Balaram, a close devotee of Sri Ramakrishna asked, "If Purna is perfect by nature, then what is M.'s function?" Sri Ramakrishna's straightforward answer is: "A mere instrument." Be it serving the devotees by bringing them to Sri Ramakrishna or writing the Gospel to bring Sri Ramakrishna to his devotees – in all situations M is nothing more than an instrument.

M was instrumental in bringing Naren a student his school also. As Swami Vivekananda, then a young man Naren was already there this new boy was named "younger Naren". This Naren had promised to show Ramakrishna the nature of

electricity with an instrument. The instrument was exhibited. This young boy was trying find out if we any free will, Sri Ramakrishna taught him: "*Just try to find out who this I is. While you are searching for I, 'He' comes out. 'I am the machine and He is the Operator.'* You have heard of a mechanical toy that goes into a store with a letter in its hand. You are like that toy. God alone is the Doer. Do your duties in the world as if you were the doer, but knowing all the time that God alone is the Doer and you are the instrument."

Mind has to be free from ego. Addressing Dr. Sarkar, Sri Ramakrishna continued: "Look here. One cannot attain Knowledge unless one is free from egotism. There is a saying:

When shall I be free?

When I shall cease to be.

I and 'mine'-that is ignorance. 'Thou' and Thine' that is Knowledge. A true devotee says: 'O God, Thou alone art the Doer; Thou alone doest all. I am a mere instrument; I do as Thou makest me do. All these-wealth, possessions, nay, the universe Itself-belong to Thee. This house and these relatives are Thine alone, not mine. I am Thy servant; mine is only the right to serve Thee according to Thy bidding.'

It is explained with a story. "A man achieves neither Knowledge nor liberation as long as he has egotism. He comes back again and again to the world. The calf bellows, 'Hamba! Hamba!', that is, 'I! I!' That is why it suffers such agony. The butcher slaughters it and the shoe-maker makes shoes from its hide. Besides, its hide is used for the drum, which is beaten mercilessly. Still no end to its misery! At long last a carding machine is made from its entrails. While carding the cotton the machine makes the sound 'Tuhu! Tuhu!', that is, 'Thou! Thou!' Then the poor calf is released from all suffering. It no longer says, 'Hamba! Hamba!' but repeats, 'Tuhu! Tuhu!'



The calf says, as it were, 'O God, Thou art the Doer and I am nothing. Thou art the Operator and I am

the machine. Thou art everything.'

However, However, the problem in identifying the ego is that it exists in an unnoticeable way. For

example Pratap, a Brahmo devotee is talking proudly about a scholarly lady from the southern part of India: "Some women of our country have been to England. This Marhatta lady, who is very scholarly, also visited England. Later she embraced Christianity. Have you heard her name, sir?"

Sri Ramakrishna could see where the problem was. He answered, "No. But from what you say it seems to me that she has a desire for name and fame. That kind of egotism is not good. The feeling 'I am the doer' is the outcome of ignorance. But the feeling that God does everything is due to knowledge. God alone is the Doer; all others are mere instruments in His hands."

Until the ego is gone one cannot realize this relationship of machine and the operator. How will the ego be gone? Smiling, Sri Ramakrishna would answer: Sadhana, practice-practice and more spiritual practices. Take Doctor Durgacharan's case, for instance. This doctor was a great drunkard. He used to drink twenty-four hours a day. But he did not make any mistake in treating his patients. So Sri Ramakrishna suggests, "There is no harm in doing work after the attainment of bhakti. But it is very hard. ... One needs intense tapasya. "It is God who does everything. We are His instruments."

He said directly, "Even the Divine Mother had to practise austere sadhana to obtain Siva as Her husband. She practised the panchatapa. She would also immerse Her body in water in wintertime, and look fixedly at the sun. Krishna Himself had to practise much sadhana. I had many mystic experiences, but I cannot reveal their contents. Under the bel-tree I had many flaming visions. There I practised the various sadhanas prescribed in the Tantra. I needed many articles-human skulls, and so forth and so on. The Brahmani used to collect these things for me. I practised a number of mystic postures." After that when his ego was cleared out, he experienced a strange thing: "If I felt egotistic on a particular day, I would be sick the following day."

In the Gospel it is recorded several times that Sri Ramakrishna says, "Three words-'master', 'teacher', and 'father'-prick me like thorns. I am the son of God, His eternal child. How can I be a 'father'? God alone is the Master and I am His instrument. He is the

Operator and I am the machine. "If somebody addresses me as guru, I say to him: 'Go away, you fool! How can I be a teacher?' There is no teacher except Satchidananda. There is no refuge except Him. He alone is the Ferryman to take one across the ocean of the world. ... If God, through His grace, ever reveals Himself to His devotee and makes him understand, then he will know; but not otherwise."

Though Sri Ramakrishna himself said, "Narada and sages of his kind are like a huge log that not only can float across to the other shore but can carry many animals and other creatures as well. A steamship itself crosses the ocean and also carries people across" – but he did not have the ego to equate himself with the great sages of the past.

However, no spiritual progress is possible without renunciation. What is to be renounced? Ego. Ego causes our sufferings.

Sri Ramakrishna cautions, "Even after the attainment of Knowledge this 'I-consciousness' comes up, nobody knows from where." All troubles get over when one gets an attitude like: "Lord, I am the servant; Thou art the Master. I am the child; Thou art the Mother" comes.

"How can one expect to attain God without renunciation? Suppose one thing is placed upon another; how can you get the second without removing the first?", asks Sri Ramakrishna. Therefore, the practice of renunciation is necessary "One must pray to God without any selfish desire. But selfish worship, if practiced with perseverance, is gradually turned into selfless worship." Lust and gold are the chief among all desires. While advising his male devotees Sri Ramakrishna is sharing his perspective towards women and how to practice it. "Women are, all of them, the veritable images of Sakti. In northwest India the bride holds a knife in her hand at the time of marriage; in Bengal, a nut-cutter. The meaning is that the bridegroom, with the help of the bride, who is the embodiment of the Divine Power, will sever the bondage of illusion. This is the 'heroic' attitude. I never worshipped the Divine Mother that way. My attitude toward Her is that of a child toward its mother. "The bride is the very embodiment of Sakti.

Haven't you noticed, at the marriage ceremony, how the groom sits behind like an idiot? But the bride - she is so bold!"



How does the instrument, mind, act? Sri Ramakrishna explained this in various ways : "Have you ever seen the spring trap for fish, called the 'satka-kal'? ... One end of a bamboo pole is fastened in the ground, and the other is bent over with a catch. From this end a line with a hook hangs over the water, with bait tied to the hook. When the fish swallows the bait, suddenly the bamboo jumps up and regains its upright position.



Another time he gave an example of with a different instrument – a bamboo trap. The bamboo is naturally straight. But why is it bent in the trap? In order

to catch the fish. Desires are the fish. Therefore the mind is bent down toward the world. If there are no desires, the mind naturally looks up toward God."

Desires are what make the mind scattered. A concentrated mind is the most important condition to attain the state of yoga. In Sri Ramakrishna's words, "The mind is dispersed. Part of it has gone to Dacca, part to Delhi, and another part to Coochbehar. That mind is to be gathered in; it must be concentrated on one object. If you want sixteen anna's worth of cloth, then you have to pay the merchant the full sixteen annas. Yoga is not possible if there is the slightest



obstacle. If there is a tiny break in the telegraph-wire, then the news cannot be transmitted."

"A man can live in the world after attaining God. Then he can lead the life of detachment. In the country I have seen the women of the carpenter families making flattened rice with a husking-machine. With one hand one of them turns the paddy in the hole and with the other she holds a nursing child. At the same time she talks with the buyer. She says to him: 'You owe me two annas. Pay it before you go.' But seventy-five per cent of the woman's mind is on her hand lest it should be crushed by the pestle of the husking machine."



One will be all right if he or she does not have the vain feeling: 'I am giving a lecture. Listen to me.' Sri Ramakrishna helped us to discriminate in this way, "What begets egotism? Knowledge or ignorance? It is only the humble man who attains Knowledge. In a low place rain-water collects. It runs down from a mound. ..."

Pundit Shashadhar, an eminent scholar of that time, was having a discussion about the Adyasakti with Sri Ramakrishna. Shashadhar told him, "The Primal Power alone is both the instrumental and the material cause of the universe. It is She who has created the universe and its living beings; further, She Herself has become all these. To give an example: the spider, as the instrumental cause, makes the web and, as the material cause, brings the web out of its own body." Sri Ramakrishna was happy and agreed with this explanation and shared a unique experience. "During my boyhood God manifested Himself in me. I was then eleven years old. One day, while I was walking across a paddy field, I saw something. Later on I came to know from people that I had been unconscious, and my body totally motionless. Since that day I have been an altogether different man. I began to see another person within me.

When I used to conduct the worship in the temple, my hand, instead of going toward the Deity, would very often come toward my head, and I would put flowers there. A young man who was then staying with me did not dare approach me. He would say: 'I see a light on your face. I am afraid to come very near you.'

Still Sri Ramakrishna is tuned with a machine or devotee ego. He gives Radha's example, "You know I am a fool. I know nothing. Then who is it that says all these things? I say to the Divine Mother: 'O Mother, I am the machine and Thou art the Operator. I am the house and Thou art the Indweller. I am the chariot and Thou art the Charioteer. I do as Thou makest me do; I speak as Thou makest me speak; I move as Thou makest me move. It is not I! It is not I! It is all Thou! It is all Thou!' Hers is the glory; we are only Her instruments. Once Radha, to prove her chastity, carried on her head a pitcher filled with water. The pitcher had a thousand holes, but not a drop of water spilled. People began to praise her, saying, 'Such a chaste woman the world will never see again!' Then Radha said to them: Why do you praise me? Say: Glory unto Krishna! Hail Krishna! I am only His handmaid.'

But at the same time this state is very difficult to attain. Why? "As long as the Upadhi exists there is ignorance. 'I am a scholar', 'I am a Jnani', 'I am wealthy', 'I am honourable', 'I am the master, father, and teacher' - all these ideas are begotten of ignorance. 'I am the machine and You are the Operator' - that is Knowledge. In the state of Knowledge all Upadhis are destroyed. When the log is burnt up entirely, there is no more sound; no heat either. Everything cools down. Peace! Peace! Peace!"

We read once Sri Ramakrishna treated his doctor by saying, "Look here. If a man truly believes that God alone does everything, that He is the Operator and man the machine, then such a man is verily liberated in life. 'Thou workest Thine own work; men only call it theirs.' Do you know what it is like? Vedanta philosophy gives an illustration. Suppose you are cooking rice in a pot, with potato, egg-plant, and other vegetables. After a while the potatoes, eggplant, rice, and the rest begin to jump about in the pot. They

seem to say with pride: 'We are moving! We are jumping!' The children see it and think the potatoes, egg-plant, and rice are alive and so they jump that way. But the elders, who know, explain to the children that the vegetables and the rice are not alive; they jump not of themselves, but because of the fire under the pot; if you remove the burning wood from the hearth, then they will move no more. Likewise the pride of man, that he is the doer, springs from ignorance. Men are powerful because of the power of God. All becomes quiet when that burning wood is taken away. The puppets dance well on the stage when pulled by a wire, but they cannot move when the wire snaps."

"A man who has realized God shows certain characteristics. He becomes like a child or a madman, or an inert thing or a ghou. Further, he is firmly convinced that he is the machine and God is its Operator, that God alone is the Doer and all others are His instruments. As some Sikh devotees once said to me, even the leaf moves because of God's will. One should be aware that everything happens by the will of Rama. The weaver said: 'The price of the cloth, by the will of Rama, is one rupee six annas. By the will of Rama the robbery was committed. By the will of Rama the robbers were arrested. By the will of Rama I too was arrested by the police. And at last, by the will of Rama, I was released.' This total surrender comes, "When it [mind] becomes pure, one has another experience. One realizes: 'God alone is the Doer, and I am His instrument.' One does not feel oneself to be absolutely necessary to others either in their misery or in their happiness.

Another time, to a similar question, his reply was: "Everything happens by the will of God. If your spiritual consciousness has been awakened at this place, know that I am only an instrument. 'Uncle Moon is everybody's uncle.' All happens by the will of God."

It was winter afternoon on December 26, 1883. Sri Ramakrishna was going to visit the gardens of two of his devotees. On the way he was speaking about meditation. As Sri Ramakrishna proceeded toward a garden, he saw a sadhu sitting on a couch under a tree. At once he went up to the holy man and joyfully asked to which order of monks

he belonged to. "Have you any title - Giri, Puri, or the like?" That sadhu was a paramahansa sannyasi. Hearing that, Sri Ramakrishna advised him, "That is good. 'I am Siva'-that is a good attitude. But I must tell you something else. The process of creation, preservation, and destruction that is going on day and night is due to Sakti, the Power of God. This Primal Power and Brahman are one and the same. Sakti cannot exist without Brahman, just as waves cannot exist without water. There cannot be any instrumental music without an instrument."

The essence of the Hymns to Lord Shiva (Shiva Mahinma stotram) according to Sri Ramakrishna: "God alone is the Doer, and we are all His instruments. Therefore it is impossible even for a Jnani to be egotistic. The writer of a hymn to Siva felt proud of his achievement; but his pride was dashed to pieces when Siva's bull bared his teeth. He saw that each tooth was a word of the hymn. Do you understand the meaning of this? These words had existed from the beginning less past. The writer had only discovered them.

One must be watchful until his mind becomes totally absorbed in God's name. Sri Ramakrishna met Vijay once at a kirtan program. The atmosphere was very intense. He asked Vijay to sit nearer. Sri Ramakrishna started dancing in an ecstasy of joy and Vijay also along with the other devotees danced encircling him. Vijay became so absorbed that he remained unaware that his cloth had dropped during the dance.

M writes: *When the music was over, Vijay began to look for his key, which had fallen somewhere. The Master said to him with a laugh, "Why bother about it anymore?" He meant that Vijay should have nothing more to do with boxes and keys."*

Truly this upliftment became easier for all who came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna. On Friday, September 7, 1883 M was conversing with Sri Ramakrishna. The discussion was about visions of



Sri Ramakrishna. M said, "God sports through you. This I have realized, that you are the instrument and God is the Master. God has created other

beings as if with a machine, but yourself with His own hands. ... Why should your visions not be real? Your pure mind sees those visions, and our ordinary minds see worldly objects.”

Being pleased with this explanation, Sri Ramakrishna asked further, “I see that you have grasped the idea of unreality. Well... do you find me to be like anybody else?” M replied “No, sir.” Sri Ramakrishna clarified the question, “Like any other paramahansa?” But M confirmed, “No, sir. You can't be compared to anybody else.”

Sri Ramakrishna then smiled and asked: “Have you heard of a tree called the ‘achina’?” As M was not aware of any such tree, Sri Ramakrishna compassionately explained, “There is a tree called by that name. But nobody knows what it is.”

Hearing this, M concluded: “Likewise, it is not possible to recognize you. The more a man understands you, the more uplifted he will be.”

Hazra a devotee in Dakshineswar mischievously advised Sri Ramakrishna’s disciples Baburam (later Swami Premananda) and others to ask Sri Ramakrishna for some such powers. Sri Ramakrishna, sensing mischief, called Baburam to his side, and said: “What can you ask of me? Isn’t everything that I have already yours? Yes, everything I have earned in the shape of realizations is for the sake of you all. So get rid of the idea of begging, which alienates by creating a distance. Rather realize your kinship with me and gain the key to all the treasures.”

And the key to Knowledge, devotion, liberation is in Sri Ramakrishna’s hand. Narendra, later Swami Vivekananda, always craved to attain the bliss of samadhi. One day Narendra attained the all-effacing experience of *nirvikalpa Samadhi*, when the embodied soul realizes its unity with the Absolute. After a long period Narendra regained full consciousness. Bathed in peace, he went to the Master, who said: “Now the Mother has shown you everything. But this revelation will remain under lock and key, and I shall keep the key. When you have

accomplished the Mother’s work you will find the treasure again.”

“You see, one must practise spiritual discipline to understand this correctly. Suppose, there are treasures in a room. If you want to see them and lay hold of them, you must take the trouble to get the key and unlock the door. After that you must take the treasures out. But suppose the room is locked, and standing outside the door you say to yourself: ‘Here I have opened the door. Now I have broken the lock of the chest. Now I have taken out the treasure.’ Such brooding near the door will not enable you to achieve anything. You must practise discipline.”

Sri Ramakrishna is God himself. He proclaimed, “None but the *Isvarakotis* can return to the plane of relative consciousness after attaining samadhi. Some ordinary men attain samadhi through spiritual discipline; but they do not come back. But when God Himself is born as a man, as an Incarnation, holding in His hand the key to others’ liberation, then for the welfare of humanity the Incarnation returns from samadhi to consciousness of the world.”

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We, the yantras, potentially divine souls, keep ascending towards God and through the purification of this body-bound-machine -- 'I' -- we attain That – the ever perfect state. Being free from ego, we realize that all problems are suddenly solved. There remains nothing else in the machine other than God – *deus ex machina*.



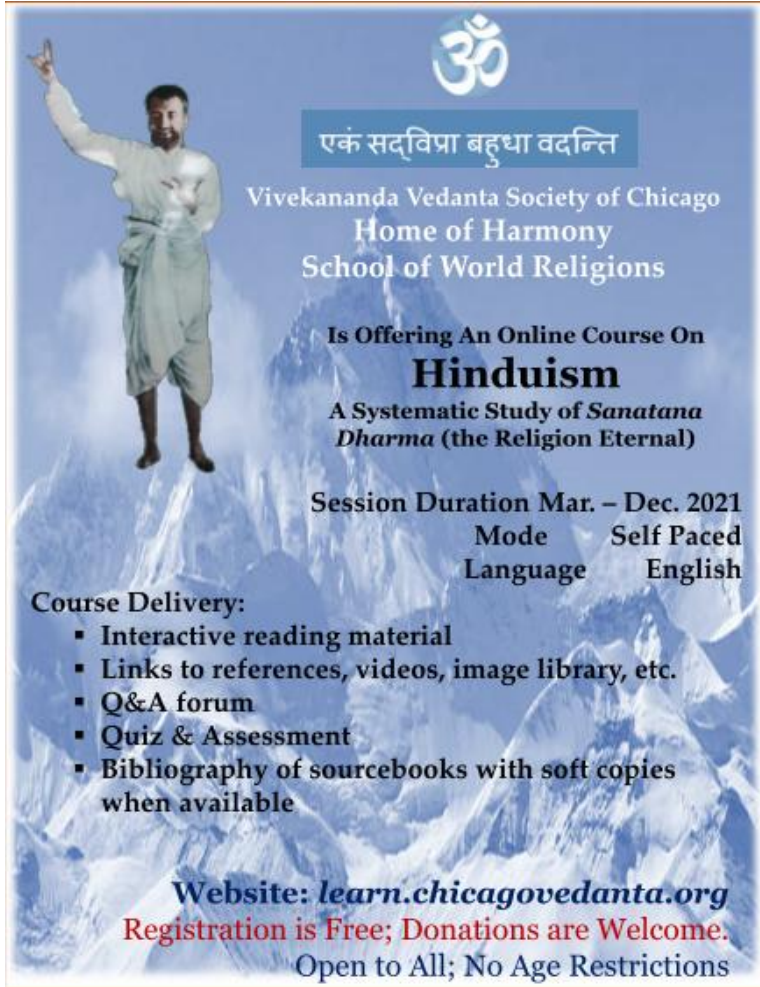
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