CHAPTER IV
SRI RAMAKRISHNA, MY MASTER.

When by the process of time, fallen from the true ideals and rules of conduct and devoid of the spirit of renunciation, addicted only to blind usages and degraded in intellect, the descendants of the Aryans failed to appreciate even the spirit of the Puranas etc., which taught men of ordinary intelligence the abstruse truths of the Vedanta in concrete form and diffuse language, and appeared antagonistic to one another on the surface, because of each inculcating with special emphasis only particular aspects of the spiritual ideal, - and when, as a consequence, they reduced India, the fair land of religion, to a scene of almost infernal confusion by breaking up piecemeal the one Eternal Religion of the Vedas (Santana Dharma), the grand synthesis of all the aspects of the spiritual ideals, into conflicting sects and by seeking to sacrifice one another in the flames of sectarian hatred and intolerance, - then, it was that Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna incarnated himself in India to demonstrate what the true religion of the Aryan race is; to show where amidst all its many division and offshoots scattered over the land in the course of its immemorial history, lies the true unity of the Hindu religion, which, by its overwhelming number of sects discordant to superficial view, quarreling constantly with each other and abounding in customs divergent in every way, has constituted itself into a misleading enigma for our countrymen and the butt of contempt for foreigners and above all, to hold up before men, for their lasting welfare, as a living
embodiment of the Sanatana Dharma, his own wonderful life into which he infused the universal spirit and character of this Dharma so long cast into oblivion by the process of time.

The Lord, though the very embodiment of the Vedas, in this His new incarnation has thoroughly discarded all external forms of learning.

This new dispensation of the age is the source of great good to the whole world, specially to India; and the inspirer of this dispensation, Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna, is the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion. O man, have faith in this, and lay it to heart.

Every new religion's wave requires a new centre. The old religion can only be revived by a new centre. Hang your dogmas or doctrines, they never pay! It is a character, a life, a centre, a God-man that must lead the way, that must be the centre round which all other elements will gather themselves and then fall like a tidal wave upon the society, carrying all before it, washing away all impurities.

Again, a piece of wood can only easily be cut along the grain. So the old Hinduism can only be reformed through Hinduism, and not through the new-fangled reform movements. At the same time, the reformers must be able to unite in themselves the culture of both the East and the West. Now you have already seen the nucleus of such a great movement, that you have heard the low rumblings of the coming tidal wave. That centre, that God-man to lead was born in India. He was the great Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.
Sankara had a great head, Ramanuja had large heart; and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart; the time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Sankara and the wonderfully expansive infinite heart of Chaitanya, one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being; one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for everyone in this world, inside India or outside India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence; such a man was born, and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years.

It was while reforms of various kinds were being inaugurated in India, that a child was born of poor Brahmin parents on the 18th of February 1836, in one of the remote villages of Bengal. The father and mother were very orthodox people. Very poor they were, and yet many a time the mother would starve herself a whole day to help a poor man. Of them, this child was born, and he was a peculiar child from very boyhood. He remembered his past from his birth, and was conscious for what purpose he came into the world, and every power was devoted to the fulfilment of that purpose.

While he was quite young, his father died. The boy was sent to school. He was peculiar, for after a few days he said, "I will not go to school any more." And he did not; that was the end of his going to school. But this boy had an elder brother, a learned professor, who took him to Calcutta, to study with him. After a short time,
the boy became fully convinced that the aim of all secular learning was mere material advancement and nothing more, and he resolved to give up study and devote himself solely to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge. The father being dead, the family was very poor, and this boy had to make his own living. He went to a place near Calcutta and became a temple priest.

In the temple was an image of the “Blissfull Mother.” This boy had to conduct the worship morning and evening and by degrees, this one idea filled his mind: “Is there anything behind this image? Is it true that there is a Mother of Bliss in the universe? Is it true that She lives and guides this universe, or is it all a dream? Is there any reality in religion?”

This idea took possession of the boy and his whole life became concentrated upon that. Day after day, he would weep and say: “Mother, is it true that Thou existest, or is it all poetry? Is the Blissful Mother an imagination of poets and misguided people, or is there such a Reality?” We have seen that of books, of education in our sense of the word, he had none; and so much the more natural, so much the more healthy was his mind, so much purer his thoughts, undiluted by drinking in the thoughts of others. Because he did not go to the university, therefore, he thought for himself. Well has Prof. Max Muller said in his article, ‘A real Mahatman’, that this was a clean, original man, and the secret of that originality was that he was not brought up within the precincts of a university. However, this thought—whether God can be seen—which was uppermost in his mind gained in strength
every day, until he could think of nothing else. He could no more conduct the worship properly, could no more attend to the various details in all their minuteness. Often he would forget to place the food-offering before the image, sometimes he would forget to wave the light, at other times, he would wave it for hours, and forget everything else.

And that one idea was in his mind every day - "Is it true that Thou existest, O Mother? Why dost Thou not speak? Art Thou dead?" At last, it became impossible for him to serve in the temple. He left it and entered into a little wood that was near and lived there. About this part of his life, he told me many times; he could not tell when the sun rose or set, or how he lived. He lost all thought of himself and forgot to eat. During this period, he was lovingly watched by a relative who put into his mouth food which he mechanically swallowed.

Days and nights thus passed with the boy. When a whole day would pass, towards the evening, when the peal of bells in the temples, and the voices singing, would reach the wood, these would make the boy very sad, he would cry, "Another day is gone in vain, Mother, and Thou hast not come. Another day of this short life has gone and I have not known the Truth." In the agony of his soul, sometimes he would rub his face against the ground and weep; and this one prayer burst forth: "Do Thou manifest Thyself in me, Thou Mother of Universe! See that I need Thee, and nothing else!" Verily, he wanted to be true to his own ideal. He had heard that the Mother
never came until everything had been given up for Her. He had heard that the mother wanted to come to everyone, but they would not have Her; that people wanted all sorts of foolish little idols to pray to, that they wanted their own enjoyments, and not the Mother, and that the moment they really wanted Her with their whole soul, and nothing else, that moment She would come. So, he began to enter into that idea, he wanted to be exact, even on the plane of matter. So, he threw away all the little property he had, and took a vow that he would never touch money and this one idea ‘I will not touch money’ became a part of him. It may appear to be something occult, but even in after-life, when he was sleeping, if I touched him with a piece of money, his hand would become bent, and his whole body would become, as it were, paralysed. The other idea that came into his mind was—lust was the other enemy. Man is a soul and soul is sexless, neither man nor woman. The idea of sex and the idea of money were the two things, he thought, that prevented him from seeing the Mother.

This illiterate boy, possessed of renunciation, turned the heads of your great old Pundits. Once at the Dakshineswar Temple, the Brahmana who was in charge of the worship of Vishnu broke a leg of the image. Pundits were brought together at a meeting to give their opinions, and they, after consulting old books and manuscripts, declared that the worship of this broken image could not be sanctioned according to the Sastras, and a new image would have to be consecrated. There was consequently a great stir. Sri Ramakrishna was called at last. He
heard and asked, "Does a wife forsake her husband in case he becomes lame?" What followed? The Pandits were struck dumb, all their Sastric commentaries and learned comments could not withstand the force of this simple statement. That is why Sri Ramakrishna came down to this earth, and discouraged mere book-learning so much. That new life-force which he brought with him has to be instilled into learning and education.

We have seen in Sri Ramakrishna how he had the idea of divine motherhood in every woman, of whatever caste she might be, or whatever might be her worth.

This whole universe is the manifestation of the Mother, and She was in every woman's body. "Every woman represents the Mother; how can I think of woman in mere sex relation?" That was the idea. Every woman was his Mother; he must bring himself to the state when he would see nothing but Mother in every woman; and he carried it out in his life.

Later on, this very man said to me, "My child, suppose there is a bag of gold in one room, and a robber in the next room, do you think that robber can sleep? He cannot. His mind will be always thinking how to get into that room and obtain possession of that gold. Do you think then that a man firmly persuaded that there is a Reality behind all these appearances, that there is a God, that there is One who never dies, One who is infinite bliss, compared with which these pleasures of the senses are simply playthings, can rest contented without struggling to attain it? Can he cease
his efforts for a moment? No; he will, become mad with longing." This divine madness seized the boy. At that time, he had no teacher, nobody to tell him anything, and everyone thought that he was out of his mind.

So days, weeks, months passed in continuous struggle of the soul to arrive at Truth. The boy began to see visions, to see wonderful things; the secrets of his nature were, beginning to open to him. Veil after veil was, as it were, being taken off. Mother Herself became the teacher, and initiated the boy into truths he sought. At this time, there came to this place a woman, of beautiful appearance, learned beyond compare. Later on, this Saint used to say about her that she was not learned, but was the embodiment of learning; she was learning itself in human form.

She was a Sannyasini, for women also give up the world, throw away their property, do not marry, and devote themselves to the worship of the Lord. She came, and when she heard of this boy in the grove, she offered to go and see him, and hers was the first help he received. At once, she recognised what his trouble was and she said to him, "My son, blessed is the man upon whom such madness comes. People may call you mad, but yours is the right kind of madness. Blessed is the man who is mad after God. Such men are very few." This woman remained near the boy for years, taught him the forms of the religions of India, initiated him into the different practices of Yoga, and, as it were, guided and brought into harmony this tremendous river of spirituality.
Later there came to the same grove a Sannyasin, of the begging friars of India, a learned man, a philosopher. He was a peculiar man; he was an idealist. This man began to teach the boy the philosophy of the Vedas, and he found very soon, to his astonishment, that the pupil was in some respects wiser than the master. He spent several months with the boy, after which he initiated him into the Order of Sannyasins, and took his departure.

*When a temple-priest his extra-ordinary worship made people think him deranged in his head, his relatives took him home and married him to a little girl, thinking that would turn his thoughts and restore the balance of his mind.*

But, he came back, and merged deeper in his madness. The husband had entirely forgotten that he had a wife. In her far off home, the girl heard that her husband had become a religious enthusiast, and that he was even considered insane by many.

She resolved to learn the truth for herself; so she set out and walked to the place where her husband was. When at last she stood in her husband's presence, he at once admitted her right to be his life-partner. The young man fell at the feet of his wife and said, "As for me, the Mother has shown me that She resides in every woman, and so, I have learned to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the one idea I can have about you, but if you wish to draw me into the world, as I have been married to you, I am at your service."

The maiden was a pure and noble soul, and was able to understand her husband's aspirations and sympathise
with them. She quickly told him that she had no wish to drag him down to a life of worldliness; but that all she desired was to remain near him, to serve him and to learn from him. She became one of his most devoted disciples, always revering him as a divine being. Thus, through his wife's consent, the last barrier was removed, and he was free to lead the life he had chosen.

That was the woman. The husband went on and became a monk, in his own way; and from a distance the wife went on helping as much as she could. And later, when the man had become a great spiritual giant, she came—really, she was the first disciple and she spent the rest of her life taking care of the body of this man. He never knew whether he was living or dying. Sometimes when talking, he would get so absorbed that if he sat on live charcoals, he would not know it! Live charcoals forgetting all about his body at the time.

The next desire that seized upon the soul of this man was to know the truth about the various religions. Up to that time, he had not known any religion but his own. He wanted to understand what other religions were like. So he sought teachers of other religions. He found a Mahommedan Saint and went to live with him; he underwent the disciplines prescribed by him, and to his astonishment found that when faithfully carried out, these devotional methods led him to the same goal he had already attained. He gathered similar experience from following the true religion of Jesus the Christ.
He went to all the sects he could find, and whatever he took up, he went into it with his whole heart. He did exactly as he was told, and in every instance, he arrived at the same result. Thus, from actual experience he came to know that the goal of every religion is the same, that each is trying to teach the same thing, the difference being largely in method, and still more in language.

That is what my Master found and he then set about to learn humility, because he had found that the one idea in all religions is “not me, but Thou,” and he who says “not me”, the Lord fills his heart. He now set himself to accomplish this. As I have told you, whenever he wanted to do anything, he never confined himself to fine theories, but would enter into the practice immediately. We see many persons talking the most wonderfully fine things about charity and about equality and the rights of other people and all that, but only in theory. I was so fortunate as to find one who was able to carry theory into practice. He had the most wonderful faculty of carrying everything into practice which he thought was right.

Now, there was a family of Pariahs living near the place. My Master would go to a Pariah and asked to be allowed to clean his house. The business of the Pariah is to clean the streets of the cities, and to keep houses clean. By birth the Brahmin stands for holiness, and the pariah for the very reverse. And this Brahmin asked to be allowed to do the menial services in the house of the pariah! The pariah, of course, could not.
allow that, for they all think that if they allow a Brahmin to do such menial work, it will be an awful sin, and they will become extinct. The pariah would not permit it; so in the dead of night, when all were sleeping, Ramakrishna would enter the house. He had long hair, and with his hair, he would wipe the place, saying, “Oh my Mother, make me the servant of the pariah; make me feel that I am even lower than the pariah.”

There were various other preparations, which would take a long time to relate, and I want to give you just a sketch of his life. For years, he thus educated himself. One of the sadhanas was to root out the sex idea. Having been born in a masculine body, this man wanted to bring the feminine idea into everything. He began to think that he was a woman; he dressed like a woman, spoke like a woman, gave up the occupation of men, and lived in the household among the women of a good family, until after years of this discipline, his mind became changed, and he entirely forgot the idea of sex; thus, the whole view of life became changed to him.

We hear in the West about worshipping woman, but this is usually for her youth and beauty. This man meant by worshipping woman, that to him every woman’s face was that of the Blissfull Mother, and nothing but that. I myself have seen this man standing before those women whom society would not touch, and falling at their feet bathed in tears saying, “Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form Thou art the universe. I salute Thee, Mother, I salute Thee.”
Think of the blessedness of that life from which all carnality has vanished, which can look upon every woman with that love and reverence, when every woman’s face becomes transfigured, and only the face of the Divine Mother, the Blissful One, the Protectress of the human race, shines upon it! Such purity is absolutely necessary if real spirituality is to be attained.

This rigorous, unsullied purity came into the life of that man; all the struggles which we have in our lives were past for him. His hard-earned jewels of spirituality, for which he had given three-quarters of his life, were now ready to be given to humanity, and then began his mission. His teaching and preaching were peculiar. This teacher had no thought whether he was to be respected or not; he had not the least idea that he was a great teacher; and thought that it was the Mother who was doing everything and not he. He always said, “If any good comes from my lips, it is the Mother who speaks; what have I to do with it?” That was the one idea about his work, and to the day of his death, he never gave it up. This man sought no one; his principle was: first form character, first earn spirituality, and results will come of themselves. His favourite illustration was “When the lotus opens, the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey; so let the lotus of your character be full-blown and the results will follow.” This is a great lesson to learn. My Master taught me this lesson hundreds of times, yet, I often forget it.

Sri Ramakrishna, too, practised the Tantra, but not in the old way. Where there is the injunction of drinking
wine, he would simply touch his forehead with a drop of it. The Tantrika form of worship is a very slippery ground.

The Puris seem to have a peculiar mission in rousing the spirituality of Bengal. Sri Chaitanya Deva was initiated into Sannyasa by Ishwar Puri, at Gaya. Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna got his Sannyasasrama from Tota Puri.

Sri Ramakrishna wept and prayed to the Divine Mother to send him such a one to talk with as would have in him not the slightest tinge of Kamakanchana; for he would say, "My lips burn when I talk with the worldly-minded." He also used to say that he could not even bear the touch of the worldly-minded and the impure.

This habit (in me) of seeing every person from his strongest aspect must have been the training under Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. We all went by his path to some extent. Of course, it was not so difficult for us as he made it for himself. He would eat and dress like the people he wanted to understand, take their initiation, and use their language. "One must learn," he said, "to put oneself into another man's very soul!" And this method was his own! No one ever before in India became Christian and Mohammedan and Vaishnava by turns!

Take a thousand idols more if you can produce Ramakrishna Paramahamsa through idol-worship, and may God speed you!

The world used to call him mad, and this was his answer: "My friends, the whole world is a lunatic asylum;
some are mad after worldly love, some after fame, some after salvation and going to heaven. In this big lunatic asylum, I am also mad, I am mad after God. You are mad; so am I; I think my madness is after all the best."

Ramakrishna was born in the Hooghly district in 1836 and died in 1886. He produced a deep effect on the life of Keshub Chandra Sen and others. By discipline of the body and subduing of the mind, he obtained a wonderful insight into the spiritual world. His face was distinguished by childlike tenderness, profound humility, and remarkable sweetness of expression. No one could look upon it unmoved.

Sometimes, the mind is concentrated on a set of ideas - this is called meditation with Vikalpa or oscillation. But, when the mind becomes almost free from all activities, it melts in the inner Self, which is the essence of infinite knowledge, One, and Itself Its own support. This is what is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi, free from all activities. In Sri Ramakrishna, we have again and again noticed both these forms of Samadhi. He had not to struggle to get these states. It was a wonderful phenomenon! It was by seeing him that we could rightly understand these things.

It is not very difficult to bring under control the material powers and flaunt a miracle; but I do not find a more marvellous miracle than the manner in which this mad Brahmana (Sri Ramakrishna) used to handle human minds, like lumps of clay, breaking, moulding and remoulding them at ease and filling them with new ideas by mere touch.
He began to preach when he was about forty; but he never went out to do it. He waited for those who wanted his teachings to come to him.

He is worshipped in India as one of the great incarnations, and his birthday is celebrated there as a religious festival.

He never spoke a harsh word about anyone. So beautifully tolerant was he that every sect thought that he belonged to them. He found a place for each one. He was free, but free in love, not in “thunder.” The mild type creates, the thundering type spreads.

Ramkrishna came to teach the religion of today, constructive and not destructive; he had to go afresh to nature to ask for facts and he got scientific religion which never says “believe” but “see”; “I see, and you too can see.” Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings are “the gist of Hinduism;” they were not peculiar to him. Nor did he claim that they were; he cared naught for name and fame.

The other idea of his life was intense love for others. The first part of my Master’s life was spent in acquiring spirituality, and the remaining years in distributing it. Men came in crowds to hear him and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty four, and that not for one day, for months and months, until at last, the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually, there developed a vital throat disorder, and
yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him, he would insist upon having them admitted, and would answer all their questions. When expostulated with, he replied, "I do not care. I will give up twenty-thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man." There was no rest for him. Once a man asked him, "Sir, you are a great Yogi; why do you not put your mind a little on your body and cure your disease?" At first he did not answer, but when the question was repeated, he gently said, "My friend, I thought you were a sage, but you talk like other men of the world. This mind has been given to the Lord; do you mean to say that I should take it back and put it upon the body, which is but a mere cage of the soul?"

So, he went on preaching to the people, and the news spread that his body was about to pass away; and the people began to flock to him in greater crowds than ever. When the people heard that this holy man was likely to go from them soon, they began to come round him more than ever and my Master went on teaching them without the least regard for his health. We could not prevent this. Many of the people came from long distances, and he would not rest until he had answered their questions. "While I can speak I must teach them", he would say, and he was as good as his word. One day, he told us that he would lay down the body and that day, on repeating the most sacred word of the Vedas, he entered into Samadhi and passed away.

I could not believe my own ears when I heard western people talking so much of consciousness! Conscious-
ness? What does consciousness matter! Why, it is nothing as compared with the unfathomable depths of the subconscious, and the heights of the superconscious. In this, I could never be misled, for had I not seen Rama-krishna Parmahamsa gather in ten minutes from a man's subconscious mind, the whole of his past, and determine from that his future and his talent and powers?

Sri Ramakrishna was quite unable to take food in an indiscriminate way from the hands of any and all. It happened many a time that he would not accept food touched by a certain person or persons, and on rigorous investigation, it would turn out that these had some particular stain to hide.

He used to deprecate lukewarmness in spiritual attainments; as, for instance, saying that religion would come gradually, and that there was no hurry for it.

He used to disparage the longing for supernatural powers; his teaching was that one cannot attain to the Supreme Truth if one's mind is diverted to the manifest station of the powers.

We have seen how Sri Ramakrishna would encourage even those whom we considered as worthless, and change the very course of their lives thereby! His very method of teaching was a unique phenomenon.

He never destroyed a single man's special inclinations. He gave words of hope and encouragement even to the most degraded of persons and lifted them up.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane, who was more active?
The artistic faculty was highly developed in our Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, and he used to say that without this faculty none can be truly spiritual.

(He used to say, "As long as I live, so long do I learn.")

A certain young man of little understanding used always to blame Hindu Shastras before Sri Ramakrishna. One day, he praised the Bhagavad-Gita, on which Sri Ramakrishna said, "Methinks some European Pandit has praised the Gita, and so he has followed suit!"

It was no new truth that Ramakrishna Paramahamsa came to preach, though the advent brought the old truths to light. In other words, he was the embodiment of all the past religious thoughts of India. His life alone made me understand what the Shastras really meant, and the whole plan and scope of the old Shastras.

(He was the Saviour of women, Saviour of the masses, Saviour of all, high and low.)

And the most wonderful part of it was that his life's work was just near a city which was full of Western thought, a city which had run mad after these accidental ideas, a city which had become more Europeanised than any other city of India. There he lived, without any book-learning whatsoever; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name; but the most brilliant graduates of our university found in him an intellectual giant. He was a strange man, this Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the fulfilment of the Indian sages. the sage for the time, one whose teaching is just now, in the present time, most beneficial. And mark the Divine Power working behind
the man. The son of a poor priest, born in an out-of-the-way village, unknown and unthought of, today is worshipped literally by thousands in Europe and America, and tomorrow will be worshipped by thousands more. Who knows the plans of the Lord? Let me say that if I have told one word of truth, it was his and his alone, and if I have told many things, which were not true, which were not correct, which were not beneficial to the human race, they were all mine, and on me rests the responsibility:

It requires striving through many births to reach perfection or the ultimate stage with regard to a single one of the many devotional attitudes. But, Sri Ramakrishna, the king of the realm of spiritual sentiments, perfected himself in no less than eighteen different forms of devotion! He also used to say that his body would not have endured had he not held himself on to this play of spiritual sentiments.

To remove all the corruption in (present-day) religion, the Lord has incarnated Himself on earth in the present age in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. The universal teachings that he offered, if spread all over the world, will do good to humanity and the world; not for many a century past has India produced so great, so wonderful, a teacher of religious synthesis.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa came for the good of the world; call him a man, or God, or an Incarnation, just as you please.

From the day, Sri Ramakrishna was born, dates the growth of modern India and of the Golden Age.
In the Ramakrishna Incarnation, there is Knowledge, Devotion and Love, infinite knowledge, infinite love, infinite work, infinite compassion for all beings. What the whole Hindu race has thought for ages, he lived in one life. His life is the living commentary on the Vedas of all nations. People will come to know him by degrees.

The future, you say, will call Ramakrishna Paramahamsa an Incarnation of Kali. Yes, I think there is no doubt that She worked up the body of Ramakrishna for Her own ends.

He was contented simply to live that great life, and to leave it to others, to find the explanation!

One drop from the full ocean of his spirituality, if realised, will make gods of men. Such a synthesis of universal ideas you will not find in the history of the world again. Understand from this who was born in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. When he used to instruct his Sannyasi disciples, he would rise from his seat and look about to see if any householder was coming that way or not. If he found none, then in glowing words he would depict the glory of renunciation and tapasya. As a result of the rousing power of that fiery dispassion, we have renounced the world and become averse to worldliness.

Of course, everybody who has come to Sri Ramakrishna has advanced in spirituality, is advancing and will advance; Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the perfected Rishis of a previous Kalpa (cycle) take human bodies and
come on earth with the Avatars. They are the associates of the Lord. God works through them and propagates His religion. Know this for truth that they alone are the associates of the Avatar who have renounced all self for the sake of others, who giving up all sense enjoyments with repugnance, spend their lives for the good of the world, for the welfare of the Jivas.

(Shri Ramakrishna was a wonderful gardener. Therefore, he has made a bouquet of different flowers (men of different types) and formed his Order. All different types and ideas have come into it and many more will come.)

All devotees (of Sri Ramakrishna) do not belong to the group of his most intimate and nearest disciples.

When an Avatar comes, then with him are born liberated persons as helpers in his world-play. Only Avatars have the power to dispel the darkness of a million souls and give them salvation in one life. This is known as grace.

The way is to call on him (Sri Ramakrishna). Calling on him, many are blessed with his vision, can see him in a human form just like ours and obtain his grace.

Those who have seen Sri Ramakrishna are really blessed. Their family and birth have become purified by it.

Nobody has been able to understand who came on earth as Sri Ramakrishna. Even his own nearest devotees have got no real clue to it. Only some have got a little inkling of it. All will understand it afterwards.
“One should beg his food from door to door, aye, even from the house of an outcast.” But, of course, external forms are necessary in the beginning, for the inner realisation of religion, in order to make the truth of the scriptures practical in one’s life...Outward forms and observances are only for the manifestation of the great inner power of man. The object of all scriptures is to awaken those inner powers and make him understand and realise his real nature. The means are of the nature of ordinances and prohibitions... If you lose sight of the ideal and fight over the means only, how will it avail? In every country I have visited, I find this fighting over the means going on and people have no eyes on the ideal. Sri Ramakrishna came to show the truth of this.

\(\text{In the highest truth of the Parabrahman, there is no distinction of sex.)}\) We only notice this on the relative plane. And the more the mind becomes introspective, the more that idea of difference vanishes. When the mind is wholly merged in the homogeneous and undifferentiated Brahman, then, such ideas as this is a man or that a woman, do not remain at all. \(\text{We have actually seen this in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.)}\)

You study all the great teachers the world has produced, and you will see that not one of them went into the various explanations of texts; on their part, there is no attempt at “text-torturing;” no saying – “this word means this, and this is the philological connection between this and that word.” Yet, they taught.

The Master used to say that the sapling must be hedged \(\text{\#} \) round.
If anyone accepts Paramahamsa Deva as an Avatara, it is all right; if he doesn't do so, it is just the same. The truth about it is that in point of character, Paramahamsa Deva beats all previous record, and as regards teaching, he was more liberal, more original and more progressive than all his predecessors. In other words, the older Teachers were rather one-sided, while the teaching of this new Incarnation or Teacher is that the best point of Yoga, Devotion, Knowledge and Work must be combined now so as to form a new Society... The older ones were no doubt good, but this is the new religion of the age—the synthesis of yoga, knowledge, devotion and work—the propagation of knowledge and devotion to all, down to the very lowest, without distinction of age or sex. The previous Incarnations were all right but they have been synthesised in the person of Ramakrishna.

That Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was God incarnate I have not the least doubt...but, let people find out for themselves what he used to teach.

Without studying Ramakrishna Paramahamsa first, one can never understand the real import of the Vedas, the Vedanta, of the Bhagavata and the other Puranas. His life is a searchlight of infinite power thrown upon the whole mass of Indian religious thought. He was the living commentary on the Vedas and their aim. He had lived in one life the whole cycle of the national religious life of India.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is the latest Avatara and the most perfect, the concentrated embodiment of Know-
ledge, Love. and renunciation, catholicity and the desire to serve mankind. So, where is anyone else to compare with him? He is born in vain who cannot appreciate him! My supreme good fortune is that I am his servant through life after life. A single word of his is to me far weightier than the Vedas and the Vedanta. Oh, I am the servant of the servants of his servants... Certain fishermen and illiterate people called Jesus Christ a God, but, the literate people killed him. Buddha was honoured in his life time by a number of merchants and cowherds. But Ramakrishna has been worshipped in his life time—towards the end of the nineteenth century—by the demons and giants of the university as God incarnate... Here is a man in whose company we have been day and night, and yet consider him to be a far greater personality than any of the earlier Avatars.}

Our ideal is, of course, the abstract Brahman. But as all cannot be inspired by an abstract ideal, we must have a personal ideal. We have got that in the person of Sri Ramakrishna...In order that Vedanta may be realised by everyone, there must be a person who is in sympathy with the present generation. This is fulfilled in Sri Ramakrishna. So now, we should place him before everyone. Whether one accepts him as a Sadhu or an Avatar, does not matter.

He said he would come once again with us. Then, I think he will embrace Videha-Mukti (Absolute Emancipation).

The mind of those who have truly received Sri Ramakrishna's grace cannot be attached to worldliness.
The test of his grace is – unattachment to lust or wealth. If that has not come in to anyone’s life, then he has not truly received his grace.

Sri Ramakrishna’s life is presented in the book (by Prof. Max Muller) in very brief and simple language. In this life, every word of the wary historian is weighed, as it were, before being put on paper.

We have heard the great Minister of the Brahmo Samaj, the late revered Acharya Sri Keshab Chandra Sen, speaking in his charming way that Sri Ramakrishna’s simple, sweet, colloquial language breathed a superhuman purity; though in his (Ramakrishna’s) speech could be noticed some such words as we term obscene; the use of those words, on account of his uncommon child like innocence and of their being perfectly devoid of the least breath of sensuality, instead of being somewhat reproachable, served rather the purpose of embellishment.

"Know Truth for yourself, and there will be many to whom you can teach it afterwards; they will all come." This was the attitude of my Master. He criticised no one. For years, I lived with that man, but never did I hear those lips utter one word of condemnation of any sect. He had the same sympathy for all sects; he had found the harmony among them. A man may be intellectual, or devotional or mystic or active: the various religions represent one or the other of these types. Yet, it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his idea. He condemned no one, but saw the good in all.
The life of Sri Ramakrishna was an extraordinary searchlight under whose illumination one is able to really understand the whole scope of Hindu religion. He was the object-lesson of all the theoretical knowledge given in the Shastras. He showed by his life what the Rishis and Avatars really wanted to teach. The books were theories; he was the realisation. This man had in fifty-one*years lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life and so raised himself to be an object-lesson for future generations. The Vedas can only be explained and the Shastras reconciled by his theory of Avastha or "conditioned" stages— that we must not only tolerate others, but positively embrace them, and that truth is the basis of all religions.

He had a whole world of knowledge to teach.

He did not found a sect. No, His whole life was spent in breaking down the barriers of sectarianism and dogma. He formed no sect. Quite the reverse. He advocated and strove to establish absolute freedom of thought. He was a great Yogi.

While others, who have nothing to teach, will take up a word and write a three-volume book on its origin and use, my Master used to say: "Think of the men who went into a mango orchard and busied themselves in counting the leaves, and examining the colour of the leaves, the size of the twigs, the number of branches, and so forth, while only one of them had the sense to begin to eat the mangoes!"

These Teachers of all teachers, the Christs of the world, represent God Himself in the form of man. They can
transmit spirituality with a touch, with a wish, which makes even the lowest and most degraded characters saints in one second. They are the Teachers of all teachers; the greatest manifestations of God to man; we cannot see God except through them. We cannot help worshipping them, and they are the only beings whom we are bound to worship.

Sri Ramakrishna is a force. You should not think that his doctrine is this or that. But he is a power, living even now in his disciples and working in the world. I saw him growing in his ideas. He is still growing. Sri Ramakrishna was both a Jivanmukta and an Acharya.

It is easier to become a Jivanmukta (free in this very life) than to be an Acharya. For the former knows the world as a dream and has no concern with it; but an Acharya knows it as a dream and yet has to remain in it and work. It is not possible for everyone to be an Acharya. He is an Acharya through whom the Divine Power acts.

The Guru (Acharya) has to bear the disciple’s burden of sin, and that is the reason why diseases and other ailments appear even in the bodies of powerful Acharyas.

The highest ideal of Iswara which the human mind can grasp is the Avatara. Beyond this, there is no relative knowledge. Such Knowers of Brahman are rarely born in the world. And very few people can understand them. They alone are the proofs of the truths of scriptures, pillars of light in the ocean of the world.
In company of such Avataras and by their grace, the darkness of the mind disappears in a trice, and realisation flashes immediately in the heart. Why or by what process it occurs cannot be ascertained. But, it does occur. I have seen it happen like that.

The work which the Jnani does only conduces to the wellbeing of the world. Whatever a man of realisation says or does contributes to the welfare of all. We have minutely observed Sri Ramakrishna, he was as it were देहरूपयोगिन देहरूपः:- “in the body but not of it!” - About the motive of the actions of such personages, only this can be said - कौण्डलि कीलकाविक्षम - “Everything they do like men is simply by way of sport.”

Whoever could have thought that the life and teachings of a boy born of poor Brahmin parents in a wayside Bengal village would, in a few years, reach such distant lands as our ancestors never even dreamed of? I refer to Bhagavan Ramakrishna. Prof. Max. Muller has already written an article on Sri Ramakrishna in the "Nineteenth Century."

This is the Message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: “Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or churches or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality, and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that
it means spiritual realisation. Only those can understand who have experienced. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate to others, can be great teachers, of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions, was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great Teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself.

People love me personally. But, they little dream that what they love in me is Ramakrishna; without Him I am only a mass of foolish, selfish emotions.

He finds who seeks Him! he who with intense longing weeps for God.

— SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

I do not believe in any politics. God and truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash.

— SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.
CHAPTER IV
THF BARANAGORE MATH AND PERIPATETIC DAYS

A

Then came the sad day when our old teacher died. We nursed him as best we could. We had no friends; who would listen to a few boys, with their crank notions? Nobody. At least, in India, boys are nobodies. Just think of it - a dozen boys telling people vast, big ideas, saying they were determined to work these ideas out in life. Everybody laughed. From laughter, it became serious; it became persecution. The parents of the boys came to feel like spanking everyone of us. And the more we were derided, the more determined we became.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “In the morning and evening, the mind remains highly imbued with sattwa ideas; those are the times when one should meditate with earnestness.”

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, we went through a lot of religious practice at the Baranagore Math. We used to get up at 3 A.M. and after washing our face etc. - some after taking bath, and some without it we would sit in the worship-room and become absorbed in japam and meditation. What a strong spirit of dispassion we had in those days!

We had no thought even as to whether the world existed or not. Ramakrishnanananda busied himself day and night with the duties pertaining to Sri Ramakrishna’s
worship and service, and occupied the same position in
the Math as the mistress of the house does in a family.
It was he who would procure, mostly by begging, the
requisite articles for Sri Ramakrishna’s worship and our
sustenance. There were days when the Japam and
meditation continued from morning till four or five in the
afternoon. Ramakrishnanda waited and waited with our
meals ready, till at last he would come and drag us
from our meditation by sheer force. Oh, what a wonder-
ful constancy of devotion we noticed in him!

What was collected by begging and such other means,
was utilised for defraying the Math expenses.
Today, both Suresh Babu and Balaram Babu are no more.
Had they been alive, they would have been exceedingly
glad to see this Math (at Belur). Suresh Babu was in a
way the founder of this Math. It was he who used to
bear all the expenses of the Barangore Math. It was
Suresh Mitra who used to worry most for us in those
days. His devotion and faith have no parallel!

Owing to want of funds, I would sometimes fight for
closing the Math altogether. But, I could never
induce Ramakrishnanananda to accede to the proposal...
There were days when the Math was without a
grain of food... If some rice was collected by begging,
there was no salt to flavour it with!

On some days. there would be only rice and salt, but
nobody cared about it in the least. We were then being
carried away by a tidal wave of spiritual upsurage. Boiled
Nimba leaves, rice and salt - this was the menu for a
month at a stretch. Oh! Those wonderful days! The austerities of that period were enough to dismay supernatural beings, not to speak of men. But, it is a tremendous truth that if there is real worth in you, the more circumstances are against you, the more will that inner power manifest itself. But the reason why I provided for beds and a tolerable living in the Math is that the Sannyasins that are enrolling themselves nowadays will not be able to bear so much strain as we did. There was the life of Sri Ramakrishna to inspire us, and that was why we did not care much for privation and hardships. Boys of this generation will not be able to undergo so much hardship. Hence, it is that I have provided for some sort of habitation and a bare subsistence for them. If they get food and clothing, the boys will devote themselves to religious practice, and will learn to sacrifice their lives for the good of humanity.

Let outside people say anything against this sort of bedding and furniture. Even in jest they will at least once think of this Math. And they say it is easier to attain liberation through cherishing a hostile spirit!

After Sri Ramakrishna’s passing away, all forsook us as so many worthless, ragged boys. Only people like Suresh Babu and Balaram Babu were our friends in that hour of need. And we shall never be able to repay our debts to them.

Well, that lady, his (Sri Ramakrishna’s) wife, was the only one who sympathised with the idea of those boys. But she was powerless. She was poorer than we were. Never mind! We took the plunge, I
believed, as I am living, that these ideas were going to revolutionise India and bring better days to many lands and foreign races. With that belief, came the realisation that it is better that a few persons suffer than that such ideas should die out of this world. What if a mother or two brothers die? It is a sacrifice. Let it be done. No great thing can be done without sacrifice. The heart must be plucked out and the bleeding heart placed upon the altar. Then great things are done. Is there any other way? None have found it. I appeal to each one of you, to those who have accomplished any great thing. Oh, how much it has cost! What agony! what torture! What terrible sufferring is behind every deed of success, in every life! You know that, all of you.

And thus we went on, only a band of boys. The only thing we got from those around us was a kick and a curse, that was all.

Of course, we had to beg from door to door for our food—got hips and haws—the refuse of everything. A piece of bread here and there. We got hold of a broken-down old house, with hissing cobras living underneath; and because that was the cheapest, we went into that house and lived there.

Thus we went on for some years, in the meanwhile making excursions all over India, trying to carry out the idea gradually. Ten years were spent without a ray of light! Ten more years! A thousand times despondency came; but there was one thing always to keep us hopeful—the tremendous faithfulness to each other, the tremen-
dous love among us. I have got a hundred men and women around me; if I become the devil himself tomorrow, they will say: "Here we are still! we will never give you up!" That is the great blessing. In happiness, in misery, in famine, in pain, in the grave, in heaven or in hell he, who never gives me up, is my friend. Is such friendship a joke? A man may have salvation through such friendship. If we have that faithfulness, why, there is the essence of all concentration. You need not worship any gods in the world if you have that faith, that strength, that love. Any one that was there was with us all throughout the hard time. That made us go from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the Indus to Brahmaputra.

This band of boys began to travel about. Gradually we began to draw attention; ninety per cent was antagonism, very little of it was helpful. For we had one fault, — we were boys — in poverty, and with all the roughness of boys.

He who has to make his own way in life is a bit rough; he has not much time to be smooth and suave and polite — "my lady and my gentleman," and all that. You have seen that in life, always! He is a rough diamond, he has not much polish, he is a jewel in an indifferent setting.

And there we were. "No compromise," was the watchword. "This is the ideal and this has got to be realised. If we meet the king, though we die, we must give him a bit of our mind; if the peasant, the same." Naturally, we met with antagonism.
But, mind you, this is life's experience. If you really want the good of others the whole universe may stand against you, but cannot hurt you. It must crumble before the power of the Lord Himself in you, if you are sincere and really unselfish. And those boys were that. They came as children, pure and fresh from the hands of nature. Said our Master, "I want to offer at the altar of the Lord only those flowers that have not even been smelt, fruit that have not been touched with the fingers." The words of the great man sustained us all. For he saw through the future life of those boys that he collected from the streets of Calcutta, so to say. People used to laugh at him when he said, "You will see—this boy, that boy, what he becomes." His faith was unalterable. "Mother showed it to me. I may be weak, but when She says this is so. She never makes mistakes, it must be so."

So things went on and on for ten years without any light, but with our health breaking down all the time.

It tells on the body in the long run: sometimes one meal at nine in the evening, another time a meal at eight in the morning, another after two days, another, after three days—and always the poorest and roughest thing. Who is going to give to the beggar the good things he has? And then they have not much in India. And most of the time walking, climbing snow peaks, sometimes ten miles of hard mountain climbing just to get a meal. They eat unleavened bread in India, and sometimes they have it stored away for twenty or thirty days, until it is harder than bricks; and then they will give a crumb of that. I
would have to go from house to house to collect sufficient food for one meal. And then the bread was so hard, it made my mouth bleed to eat it. Literally, you can break your teeth with that bread. Then I would put it in a pot and pour river water over it. For months and months, I lived that way—of course, it told on the health.

He who has a dogged determination like that shall have everything...It is because we had such a determination that we have attained the little that we have. Otherwise, what dire days of privation we had to pass through! One day, for want of food I fainted in the outer platform of a house on the roadside, and quite a shower of rain drenched my head before I recovered my senses. Another day, I had to do odd jobs in Calcutta for the whole day without food, and had my meal on my return to the Math at ten or eleven in the night. And these were not solitary instances.

I worked for fulfilling the purpose for which the Lord (Sri Ramakrishna) came. He gave me the charge of them all (the youngsters), who will contribute to the great wellbeing of the world, though most of them are not yet aware of it. They are each a centre of religious power and in time that power will manifest itself.

The disciples of Jesus were all Sannyasins. The direct recipients of the grace of Sankara, Ramanuja, Sri Chaitanya and Buddha were all-renouncing Sannyasins. It is men of this stamp who have been spreading the Brahma-vidya in the world...In Veda, Vedanta, Itihasa
(history) Purana (ancient tradition), you will find everywhere that the Sannyasins have been the teachers of Religion in all ages and climes. History repeats itself. It will also be likewise now. The capable Sannyasin children of Sri Ramakrishna, the teacher of the great synthesis of religions, will be honoured everywhere as the teacher of men.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "Whoever has prayed to God sincerely for one day, must come here." Know each of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna to be of great spiritual power. Do not think them to be ordinary souls. They will be the source of the awakening of spirituality in people. Know them to be part of the spiritual body of Sri Ramakrishna, who was the embodiment of infinite religious ideas. I look upon them with that eye. See Brahmananda—even I have not the spirituality which he has. Sri Ramakrishna looked upon him as his spiritual son and he lived and walked, ate and slept with him. He is the ornament of our Math—our King. Similarly Premananda, Turiyananda, Trigunantita, Akhandananda, Saradananda, Ramakrishnanananda, Subodhananda and others.

To create a band of men who are tied and bound together with the most undying love in spite of differences, is it not wonderful? This band will increase.

The ways, movements and ideas of our Master were all cast in a new mould, so we are also of a new type. Sometimes dressed like gentlemen, we are engaged in lecturing; at other times, throwing all aside, with "Hara, Hara, Aum, Aum," on the lips, ash smeared on the
body, we are immersed in meditation and austerities in mountains and forests.

Referring to history, we see that only that fragment which is fit will survive and what makes fit to survive but character?...

Let me tell you a little personal experience. When my Master left the body, we were a dozen penniless and unknown young men. Against us were a hundred powerful organisations, struggling hard to nip us in the bud. But Ramakrishna had given us one great gift, the desire, and the lifelong struggle, not to talk alone, but to live the life. And today all India knows and reverences the Master, and the truths he taught are spreading like wildfire. Ten years ago, I could not get a hundred persons together to celebrate his birthday anniversary. In 1894, there were fifty-thousand.

His thoughts and his message were known to very few capable of giving them out. Among others, he left a few young boys who had renounced the world, and were ready to carry on his work. Attempts were made to crush them. But they stood firm, having the inspiration of that great life before them. Having had the contact of that blessed life for years, they stood their ground. These young men living as Sannyasins, begged through the streets of the city where they were born, although some of them came from high families. At first, they met with great antagonism, but they persevered and went on from day to day spreading all over India the message of that great man, until the whole country was filled with the ideas he had preached.
I am not taking pride in this. But, mark you, I have told the story of that group of boys. Today, there is not a village, not a man, not a woman in India that does not know their work and bless them. There is not a famine in the land where these boys do not plunge in and try to work and rescue as many as they can.

I believed, and still believe that without my giving up the world, the great mission which Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, my great Master, came to preach, would not see the light; and where would those young men be who have stood as bulwarks against the surging waves of materialism and luxury of the day? These have done a great deal of good to India, especially to Bengal. and this is only the beginning. With the Lord’s help, they will do things for which the whole world will bless them for ages. So on the one hand my vision of the future Indian religion and that of the whole world, my love for the millions of beings sinking down and down for ages with nobody to help them, nay nobody with even a thought for them; on the other hand, making those who are nearest and dearest miserable. I chose the former and “Lord will do the rest.” He is with me, I am sure of that, if of anything. So long as I am sincere, nothing can resist me because He will be my help. Many and many in India could not understand me; and how could they, poor men? Their thoughts never strayed beyond the everyday routine business of eating and drinking ... But appreciation or no appreciation, I am born to organise these young men......nay, more...... And this I will do or die.
We are a unique company......Nobody amongst us has a right to force his faith upon others......Many of us do not believe in any form of idolatry...... What harm is there in worshipping the Guru when that Guru was a hundred times more holy than even the historical Prophets all taken together? If there is no harm in worshipping Christ, Krishna, or Buddha, why should there be any harm in worshipping this man who never did or thought anything unholy, whose intellect only through intuition stands head and shoulders above all the other Prophets because they were all one-sided?

25-3-1887 - I have attained my present state of mind as a result of much suffering and pain. I now realise that without trials and tribulations, one cannot resign oneself to God and depend on Him absolutely.

I have noticed a peculiar thing. Some objects or places make me feel as if I had seen them before. in a previous birth. They appear familiar to me. One day I went to Sarat's house on Amherst Street. Immediately I said to Sarat: "This house seems familiar to me. It seems to me that I have known the rooms, the passages, and the rest of the house for many, many days."

April 9, 1887 - Now and then I feel great scepticism.

At Baburam's house it seemed to me that nothing existed, as if there were no such thing as God.

Whatever spiritual discipline we are practising here (Baranagore Math) is in obedience to the Master's command. But it is strange that Ram Babu criticises us
for our spiritual practices, He says, "We have seen him (Sri Ramakrishna). What need have we of any such practice?" But the Master asked us to practise sadhana.

May 7, 1887 - I don't care for anything, I shall fast unto death for the realization of God.

It seems there is no God. I pray so much, but there is no reply, none whatsoever.

How many visions I have seen! How many mantras shining in letters of gold! How many visions of the Goddess Kali! How many other divine forms! But still I have no peace.

B

Brindaban, 12-8-1888—Leaving Ayodhya I have reached Brindaban, and am putting up at Kala Babu’s Kunja.....I have a mind to proceed very shortly to Hardwar.

20-8-1888—I postpone my going to Hardwar for some days.

I saw many great men in Hrishikesh. One case that I remember was that of a man who seemed to be mad. He was coming nude down the street, with boys pursuing and throwing stones at him. The man was bubbling over with laughter, while blood was streaming down his face and neck. I took him and bathed the wound, putting ashes (made by burning a piece of cotton cloth) on it, to stop bleeding. And all the time, with peals of
laughter, he told me of the fun the boys and he had been having throwing the stones. "So the Father plays," he said.

Many of these men hide, in order to guard themselves against intrusion. People are a nuisance to them. One had human bones strewn about his cave, and gave it out that he lived on corpses. Another threw stones; and so on.

Sometimes the thing comes upon them in a flash. There was a boy, for instance, who used to come to read the Upanishads with Abhedananda. One day, he turned and said, "Sir, is all this really true?" "Oh, Yes!" said Abhedananda, "It may be difficult to realise, but it is certainly true." And next day, that boy was a silent Sannyasin, nude, on his way to Kedarnath!

**Baranagore: 19-11-1888** — A good deal of study is given to Sanskrit scriptures in this Math. This Math is not wanting in men of perseverance, talent and penetrative intellect.

**Baghbazar: 28-11-1888** — I had an attack of fever again. I am ailing much.

**Baranagore: 4-2-1889** — I am going now on a pilgrimage to the place of my Master’s nativity, and after a sojourn of few a days there, I shall present myself at Banaras.

**22-2-1889** — I had intended to go to Banaras and I planned to reach there after visiting the birthplace of my Master. But, unluckily, on the way to that village, I had
an attack of high fever followed by vomiting and purging as in cholera. There was again fever after three or four days.

**Baghbazar (Calcutta) 21–3–1889** — I am very ill at present; there is fever now and then, but there is no disorder in the spleen or other organs. I am under homeopathic treatment. Now I have to give up completely the intention of going to Banaras. Whatever God dispenses will happen, later on according to the state of the body...... My going there is very uncertain.

4–7–1889 — Some relative of my former life (i.e. the life which I have renounced) has purchased a bungalow at Simultala (near Baidyanath - Bihar). The place being credited with a healthy climate, I stayed there for some time. But the summer heat growing excessive, I had an attack of acute diarrhoea, and I have just fled away from the place. By the will of God, the last six or seven years of my life have been full of constant struggles with hindrances and obstacles of all sorts. I have been vouchsafed the ideal Shastra; I have seen the ideal man; and yet I fail myself to get on with anything to the end — this is my profound misery.

I see no chance of success, while remaining near Calcutta. In Calcutta, my mother and two brothers live, I am the eldest; the second is preparing for the first Arts, exam., and the third is young.

They were quite well off before, but since my father’s death, it is going very hard with them — they even have to go fasting at times! To crown all, some relatives taking
Swami Vivekananda
advantage of their helplessness drove them away from the ancestral residence. Though a part of it is recovered through law suits at the High Court, destitution is now upon them, a matter of course in litigation.

Living near Calcutta, I have to witness their adversity; and the quality of Rajas prevailing, my egotism sometimes develops into the form of a desire that rises to plunge me into action; in such moments, a fierce fighting ensues in my mind. Now their law suit has come to an end.

Simla: Cal. 14-7-89 - My difficulties here have almost come to a close, only I have engaged the services of a broker for the sale of a piece of land, and I hope the sale will be over soon. In that case, I shall be free from all worry.

Baranagore: 7-8-89 - Had an attack of fever...... and suffered again for the last ten days; now I am doing well

17-8-89 - I have no partiality for any party in this caste question. because I know it is a social law and is based on diversity of Guna and Karma. It also means grave harm if one, bent on going beyond Guna and Karma, cherishes in mind any caste distinctions. In these matters, I have got some ideas through the grace of my Guru.

Baghbazar: 3-12-89 - Two of my brother-disciples are shortly leaving for Banaras. One is Rakhal (Brahmananda) by name, the other is Subodh (Subodhananda). The first named was beloved of my Master and used to stay much with him.
Gangadhar is now proceeding to Kailas. The Tibetans wanted to slash him up on the way, taking him to be a spy of the foreigners. Eventually some Lamas kindly set him free; his physical endurance has grown immensely - one night he passed uncovered on a bed of snow, and that without much hardship.

But there is the chain of iron, and there is the chain of gold. Much good comes of the latter, and it drops off by itself when all the good is reaped. The sons of my Master are indeed the great objects of my service, and here alone I feel I have some duty left for me. Perhaps, I shall send brother K, down to Allahabad or somewhere else as convenient.

**Baidyanath: 24-12-1889** - I have been staying for the last few days at Baidyanath in Purna Babu’s lodge. I am suffering from indigestion, probably due to excess of iron in the water...... I leave for Banaras tomorrow.

My idea is to remain there for some time, and to watch how Viswanath and Annapurna deal out my lot. And my resolve is something like “either to lay down my life or realise my ideal” -

**Allahabad: 30-12-1889** — I was to go to Banaras, but news reached me that a brother-disciple, Yogananda by name, had been attacked with small-pox after arriving here from a pilgrimage to Chitrakuta, Omkarnath etc., and so I came to this place to nurse him.

**Ghazipur: 24-1-90** — I reached Ghazipur three days ago. Here I am putting up in the house of Babu
Satish Chandra Mukherjee, a friend of my early age. The place is very pleasant. Close by flows the Ganges...... I again had a great mind to go over to Kashi (Banaras), but the object of my coming here, namely, an interview with the Babaji (Pavahari Baba, the great saint), has not yet been realised.

_Ghazipur: 30-1-90_ — Of the few places I have recently visited, this is the healthiest. The few days I passed at Banaras, I suffered from fever day and night......I have visited Pavahari Baba’s house - there are high walls all round, and it is fashioned like an English bungalow. There is a garden inside and big rooms, chimneys etc. He allows nobody to enter. If he is so inclined, he comes up to the door and speaks from inside - that is all. One day I went and waited and waited in the cold and had to return. After a few days’ stay at Banaras, I shall start for Hrishikesh.

It is so very difficult to meet Babaji. He does not step out of his home.

_4-2-90_ — Through some good fortune, I have obtained an interview with Babaji. A great sage indeed! It is all very wonderful, and in this atheistic age, a towering representation of marvellous power born of Bhakti and Yoga! I have sought refuge in his grace, and he has given me hope - a thing very few may be fortunate enough to obtain. It is Babaji’s wish that I stay on for some days here, and he would do me some good. So following the saint’s bidding, I shall remain here for some time......... Unless one is face to face with the life of such men, faith in the scriptures does not grow in all its real integrity.
I am not leaving this place soon - it is impossible to
turn down Babaji's request.

A pain in the loins is giving me much trouble.

7-2-90 - Apparently in his features, the Babaji is a
Vaishnava, the embodiment, so to speak, of Yoga, Bhakti
and humility. His dwelling has walls on all sides with a
few doors in them. Inside these walls, there is one long
underground burrow wherein he lays himself up in Sama-
dhi. He talks to others only when he comes out of the
hole. Nobody knows what he eats, and so they call him
Pavahari Baba (i.e. one living on air). Once he did
not come out of the hole for five years, and people
thought he had given up the body. But, now again he is
out. This time, however he does not show himself to
people and talks from behind the door. Such sweetness
in speech I have never come across! He does not give a
direct reply to questions but says "What does this servant
know?" But then fire comes out as the talking goes on.
On my pressing him very much he said, "Favour me high-
ly by staying here some days." But he never speaks in
this way; so from this I understood he meant to reassure
me; and whenever I am importunate, he asks me to stay
on. So I wait and hope. He is a learned man no doubt,
nothing in the line betrays itself. He performs scriptural
ceremonials, for from the full-moon day to the last day
of the month, sacrificial oblations go on. So it is sure he
is not retiring into the hole during this period.

13-2-90 - I am having some sort of pain in the loins
which, being aggravated of late, gives much trouble. For
two days I could not go out to meet Babaji, and so a man came from him to enquire about me. For this reason, I go today........ Such amazing endurance and humility I have never seen.

14-2-90 - I have heard from Brother Gangadhar. He is now in Rambag Samadhi, Srinagar, Kashmir. I am greatly suffering from lumbago.........Rakhal and Subodh have come to Brindaban after visiting Omkar, Girnar, Abu, Bombay and Dwaraka.

25-2-90 - The lumbago is giving a good deal of trouble. It is three days since I came away from Babaji’s place, but he enquires of me kindly almost every day.

*February: 90* - Brother Kali is having repeated attacks of fever at Hrishikesh. I have sent him a wire from this place. So if from the reply I find I am wanted by him, I shall be obliged to start direct for Hrishikesh from this place; otherwise, I go to Banaras. Weaving all this web of Maya? - and that is no doubt the fact.

*PAVAHARI BABA*

I once knew a Yogi, a very old man, who lived in a hole in the ground all by himself. All he had was a pan or two to cook his meals in. He ate very little and wore scarcely anything and spent most of his time meditating.

With him all people were alike. He had attained to non-injuring. What he saw in everything, in every person, in every animal was the Soul, the Lord of the universe. With him, every person and every animal was
“my Lord.” He never addressed any person or animal in any other way. Well, one day a thief came his way and stole one of his pans. He saw him and ran after him. The chase was a long one. At last, the thief from exhaustion had to stop, and the Yogi running up to him, fell on his knees before him and said, “My Lord, you do me a great honour to come my way. Do me the honour to accept the other pan. It is also yours.” This old man is dead now. He was full of love for everything in the world. He would have died for an ant. Wild animals instinctively knew this old man to be their friend. Snakes and ferocious animals would go into his hole and sleep with him. They all loved him and never fought in his presence.

The ideal of the Yogi is eternal peace and love through omniscience and omnipotence. I know of a Yogi who was bitten by a cobra, and so fell down on the ground. In the evening he revived again, and when asked what happened, he said, “A messenger came from my Beloved.” All hatred and anger and jealousy have been burned out of this man.

Like many others in India, there was no striking or stirring external activity in the life of Pavhari Baba. It was one more example of that Indian ideal of teaching through life and not through words. Persons of this type are entirely averse to preaching what they know, for they are for ever convinced that it is internal discipline alone that leads to Truth, and not words. Religion to them is no motive to social conduct, but an intense search after, and realisation of Truth in this life.
The present writer had occasion to ask the saint the reason of his not coming out of his cave to help the world. At first, with his native humility and humour, he gave the following strong reply:

"A certain wicked person was caught in some criminal act, and had his nose cut off as a punishment. Ashamed to show his noseless features to the world, and disgusted with himself, he fled into a forest, and there spreading a tiger skin on the ground, he would feign deep meditation, whenever he thought any body was about.

"This conduct, instead of keeping people off, drew them in crowds to pay their respects to this wonderful saint, and he found that his forest life had brought him once again an easy living. Thus years went by. At last, the people around became very eager to listen to some instruction from the lips of the silent meditative saint, and one young man was specially anxious to be initiated into the Order. It came to such a pass that any more delay in that line would undermine the reputation of the saint. So one day he broke his silence, and asked the enthusiastic young man to bring on the morrow a sharp razor with him. The young man, glad at the prospect of the great desire of his life being speedily fulfilled, came early the next morning with the razor. The noseless saint led him to a very retired spot in the forest, took the razor in his hand, opened it, and with one stroke cut off his nose repeating in a solemn voice, "Young man, this has been my initiation into the Order. The same I give to you. Do you transmit it diligently to others when the opportunity comes!" The young man could not divulge the
secret of this wonderful initiation for shame, and carried out to the best of his ability the injunction of his master. Thus, a whole sect of nose-cut saints spread over the country. Do you want me to be the founder of another such?"

Later on, in a more serious mood, another query brought the answer: "Do you think that physical help is the only help possible? Is it not possible that one mind can help other minds, even without the activity of the body?"

When asked on another occasion, why he, a great Yogi, should perform Karma, such as pouring oblations into the sacrificial fire, and worshipping the image of Sri Raghunathji, which are practices only meant for beginners, the reply came, "Why do you take for granted that everybody makes Karma for his own good? Cannot one perform Karma for others?"

One of his great peculiarities was his entire absorption in the task in hand, however trivial. The same amount of care and attention was bestowed on cleaning a copper pot, as on the worship of Sri Raghunathji, he himself being the best example of the secret he once told us of work, "The means should be loved and cared for as if it were the end itself."

His humility was not kindred to that which means pain and anguish of self-abasement. It sprang naturally from the realisation of that which he once so beautifully explained to us: "O king, the Lord is the wealth of those
who have nothing - yes, of those," he continued, "who have thrown away all desires of possession, even that of one's own soul."

In appearance he was tall and rather fleshy, had but one eye, and looked much younger than his real age. His voice was the sweetest we have ever heard. The present writer owes a deep debt of gratitude to the departed saint and dedicates these lines, however, unworthy, to the memory of one of the greatest Masters he has loved and served.

Ghazipur: March 1890 - I am staying with Pahariji, the wonderful Raja-Yogin, and he has given me some hopes, too. There is a beautiful bungalow in a small garden belonging to a gentleman here. I mean to stay there. The garden is quite close to the Babaji's cottage. A brother of the Babaji stays there to look after the comforts of the sadhus, and I have my Bhiksha at his place. Hence, with a view to seeing to the end of this fun, I give up for the present my plan of going to the hills. Let me wait and see what Babaji will give me.

My motto is to learn whatever good things I may come across anywhere. This leads many friends to think that it will take away my devotion to the Guru.

After Sri Ramakrishna's leaving the body, I associated for some time with Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur. There was a garden not far distant from his Ashrama where I lived. People used to say it was a haunted garden, but I am a sort of demon myself and have not much fear of ghosts. In that garden there were many lemon trees
which bore numerous fruits. At that time, I was suffering from diarrhoea, and there no food could be had except bread. So, to increase the digestive powers, I used to take plenty of lemons. Mixing with Pavhari Baba, I liked him very much and he also came to love me deeply. One day, I thought that I did not learn any art for making this weak body strong, after living with Sri Ramakrishna for so many years. I had heard that Pavhari Baba knew the science of Hatha-yoga. So, I thought I would learn the practice of Hatha-yoga from him, and through it strengthen the body. By nature I have a dogged resolution and whatever I set my heart on, I always carry out. On the eve of the day on which I was to take initiation, (from Pavhari Baba), I was lying on a cot thinking and just then I saw the form of Sri Ramakrishna standing on my right side, looking steadfastly at me, as if very much grieved. I had dedicated myself to him, and at the thought that I was taking another Guru I was much ashamed and kept looking at him. Thus, perhaps, two or three hours passed, but no words escaped from my mouth. Then he disappeared all of a sudden. My mind became upset seeing Sri Ramakrishna that night; so, I postponed the idea of initiation from Pavhari Baba for the day. After a day or two again the idea of initiation from Pavhari Baba arose in the mind, and again in the night there was the appearance of Sri Ramakrishna as on the previous occasion. Thus when for several nights in succession I had the vision of Sri Ramakrishna, I gave up the idea of initiation altogether, thinking that as every time I resolved on it, I was getting such a vision, then no good but harm would come from it.
Ghazipur: 3-3-90 – The lumbago obstinately refuses to leave me, and the pain is very great. For the last few days I haven’t been able to go to see Pavhariji, but out of his kindness he sends every day for my report, but, now I see the whole matter is inverted in its bearings! While I myself have come as a beggar at his door, he turns round and wants to learn of me! This saint perhaps is not yet perfected - too much of works, vows, observances, and too much of self-concealment.

By my stay here, I have been cured of all other symptoms of malaria, only the pain in the loins make me frantic; day and night it is aching and chafes me very much......I find wonderful endurance in Babaji, and that is why I am begging something of him, but no inkling of the mood to give, only receiving and receiving! So, I also fly off.

To no big person am I going any longer. “Remain, O mind, within yourself etc,” Says the poet Kamalakanta.

So now the great conclusion is that Ramakrishna has no peer, nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all, that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for the man in bondage. Either he must be an Avatara as he himself used to say, or else the ever-perfected divine man of whom the Vedanta speaks as the Free One who assumes a body for the good of humanity. This is my conviction sure and certain; and the worship of such a divine man has been referred to by Patanjali in the aphorism:
"Or the goal may be attained by meditating on a saint."
(Patanjal Darshan - aphorism 1/37: The mind becomes calm when meditating on a person unattached to sense-object.)

Ghazipur: 3-3-90 - I am a very soft-natured man in spite of the stern Vedantic views I hold. And this proves to be my undoing. At the slightest touch, I give myself away; for howsoever I may try to think only of my own good, I slip off in spite of myself to think of other people's interests. This time it was with a very stern resolve that I set out to pursue my own good; but I had to run off at the news of the illness of a brother at Allahabad. And now comes this news from Hrishikesh, and my mind has run off with me there.

15-3-90 - I am leaving this place tomorrow. Let me see which way destiny leads!

31-3-90 - I haven't been here for the last few days and am again away today. I have asked brother Gangadhar to come here, and if he comes we go over to Benares together. For some special reason, I shall continue to stay in secret in a village some distance off this place. The news of his arrival is not yet received and his health being bad, I am very anxious for his sake. I have behaved very cruelly towards him - that is, I have harassed him much to make him leave my company. There is no help...... I am so very weak-hearted, so much overmastered by the distractions of love!.... What shall I say about the condition of my mind! Oh, it is as if the hell-fire is burning there day and night! Nothing,
nothing could I do yet! And this life seems muddled away in vain; I feel quite helpless as to what to do! The Babaji throws out honeyed words and keeps me from leaving. Ah, what shall I say? I am... a man driven mad with mental agonies. Abhedananda is suffering from dysentery... My Gurubais must be thinking me very cruel and selfish. Oh, what can I do? Who will see deep down into my mind? Who will know how much I am suffering day and night?... My lumbago is as before.

2-4-90 - My salutations to Pramada Babu; his is a friendship which greatly benefits both my mind and body. And I am particularly indebted to him. Things will turn up some way, anyhow.

Baranagore: 10-5-90 - Directly the hot weather relaxes a little I am off from this place, but I am still at a loss where to go.

Baghbazar, Cal. 26-5-90 - I am Ramakrishna's slave, having laid my body at his feet "with til and tulsi leaves." I cannot disregard his behest. If it is in failure that that great sage laid down his life after having attained to superhuman heights of Jnana, Bhakti, Love and Powers, and after having practised for forty years stern renunciation, non-attachment, holiness and great austeries, then where is there anything for us to count on? So, I am obliged to trust his words as the words of one identified with Truth.

Now his behest to me was that I should devote myself to the service of the Order of all-renouncing devotees founded by him, and in this, I have to persevere,
come what may, being ready to take heaven, hell, salvation or anything that may happen to me.

His command was that his all-renouncing devotees should group themselves together and I am entrusted with seeing to this. Of course, it matters not if anyone of us goes out on visits to this place or that, but these shall be but visits, while his own opinion was that absolute homeless wandering suited him alone who was perfected to the highest point. Before that state, it is proper to settle somewhere to dive down into practice.

So in pursuance of this his commandment, his group of Sannyasins are now assembled in a dilapidated house at Baranagore, and two of his lay disciples, Babu Suresh Chandra Mitra and Babu Balaram Bose, so long provided for their food and house-rent.

For various reasons the body of Bhagavan Rama-krishna had to be consigned to fire... The remains of his ashes are now preserved, and if they can be now properly enshrined somewhere on the banks of the Ganges, I presume we shall be able in some measure to expiate the sin lying on our head. These sacred remains, his seat and his picture are everyday worshipped in our Math in proper form; a brother-disciple of mine, of Brahmin parentage, is occupied day and night with the task. The expenses of the worship used also to be borne by the two great souls mentioned above.

What greater regret there can be than this that no memorial could yet be raised in this land of Bengal in the very neighbourhood of the place where he lived his life of sadhana - he by whose birth the race of Bengalees has.
been sanctified, the land of Bengal has become hallowed; he who came on earth to save the Indians from the spell of the worldly glamour of Western culture, and who, therefore, chose most of his all-renouncing disciples from university men?

The two gentlemen mentioned above had a strong desire to have some land purchased on the banks of the Ganges and see the sacred remains enshrined on it, with the disciples living there together; and Suresh Babu had offered a sum of Rs. 1,000/- for the purpose, promising to give more, but for some inscrutable purpose of God, he left this world yesternight! And Balaram Babu's death has already occurred.

Now there is no knowing as to where his disciples will stand with his sacred remains and his seat. The disciples are Sannyasins and are ready forthwith to depart anywhere their way may lie. But, I, their servant, am in an agony of sufferings, and my heart is breaking to think that a small piece of land could not be had in which to install the remains of Bhagavan Ramakrishna.

I have not the slightest qualm to beg from door to door for this noble cause, for the sake of my Lord and his Children... To my mind, if all these sincere, educated youthful Sannyasins of good birth fail to live up to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna owing to want of an abode and help, then alas for our country!

If asked, "You are a Sannyasin, so why do you trouble over these desires?" — I would then reply, "I am Ramakrishna's servant, and I am willing even to steal and
rob, if by doing so, I can perpetuate his name in the land of his birth and sadhana, and help even a little his disciples to practise his great ideals... I have returned to Calcutta for this reason.

_Baghbazar, Cal. 4-6-90_ - It is quite true that the Lord's Will will prevail. We are spreading out here and there in small groups of two or three. I got two letters from Brother Gangadhar. He is at present in the house of Gagan Babu, suffering from an attack of influenza. Gagan Babu is taking special care of him. He will come here as soon as he recovers.

_6-7-90_ - I had no wish to leave Ghazipur this time, and certainly not to come to Calcutta, but Kali's illness made me go to Banaras, and Balaram's sudden death brought me to Calcutta. So, Suresh babu and Balaram Babu have both gone! G.C. Ghosh is supporting the Math... I intend shortly, as soon as I can get my fare, to go up to Almora and thence to some place in Gharwal on the Ganges where I can settle down for a long meditation. Gangadhar is accompanying me. Indeed it was with this desire and intention that I brought him down from Kashmir.

I am in fine health now.

I was once travelling in the Himalayas and the long road stretched before us. We poor monks cannot get any one to carry us, so we had to make all the way on foot. There was an old man with us. The way goes up and down for hundreds of miles, and when that old monk saw what was before him, he said, "Oh, Sir, how to cross
it? I cannot walk any more, my chest will break.” I said to him, “Look down at your feet.” He did so, and I said, “The road that is under your feet is the road that you see before you; it will soon be under your feet.” The highest things are under your feet, because you are Divine Stars; all these things are under your feet. You can swallow the stars by the handful if you want; such is your real nature. Be strong, get beyond all superstition, and be free.

Many times I have been in the jaws of death, starving, footsore, and weary; for days and days I had had no food, and often could walk no further; I would sink down under a tree, and life would seem ebbing away. I could not speak; I could scarcely think, but at last the mind reverted to the idea: “I have no fear of death; I never hunger or thirst. I am it, I am it; the whole of nature cannot crush me; it is my servant. Assert thy strength, Thou Lord of Lords and God of Gods! Regain Thy lost empire! Arise and walk and stop not!” and I would rise up, re-invigorated, and here am I, living today.

Real monasticism is not easy to attain. There is no order of life so rigorous as this. If you stumble ever so little, you are hurled down a precipice - and are smashed to pieces. One day, I was travelling on foot from Agra to Vrindaban. There was no farthing with me. I was about a couple of miles from Vrindaban, when I found a man smoking on the roadside. and I was seized with a desire to smoke. I said to the man, “Hello, will you let me have a puff at your chillum?” He seemed to be hesitating greatly and said, “Sir, I am a sweeper!” Well, there was the influence of the old samskaras, and I
immediately stepped back and resumed my journey without smoking. I had gone a short distance when the thought occurred to me that I was a Sannyasin who had renounced caste, family, prestige and everything and still I drew back as soon as the man gave himself out as a sweeper, and could not smoke the chillum touched by him! The thought made me restless at heart: then I had walked on half a mile. Again, I retraced my steps and came to the sweeper whom I found still sitting there. I hastened to tell him, "Do prepare a chillum of tobacco for me, my dear friend." I paid no heed to his objection and insisted on having it. So, the man was compelled to prepare a chillum for me. Then I gladly had a puff at it and proceeded to Vrindaban.

You find that in every religion, mortifications and asceticisms have been practised. In these religious conceptions the Hindus always go to the extremes. I once saw a man who had kept his hands raised in this way, and I asked him how it felt when he did it first. He said it was awful torture. It was such a torture that he had to go to a river and put himself in water, and that allayed the pain for a little while. After a month, he did not suffer much. Through such practices, powers (Siddhis) can be attained.

When I was in Jaipur, I met a great grammarian and felt a desire to study Sanskrit grammar with him. Although he was a great scholar in that branch, he had not much aptitude for teaching. He explained to me the commentary on the first aphorism for three days continuously, still I could not grasp a bit of it. On the fourth
day, the teacher got amazed and said, "Swamiji, I could not make you understand the meaning of the first aphorism even in three days; I fear, you will not be much benefited by my teaching." Hearing these words, a great self-reproach came over me. Putting food and sleep aside, I set myself to study the commentry on the first aphorism independently. Within three hours the sense of the commentary stood explained before me as clearly as anything. Then going to my teacher, I gave him the sense of the whole commentary. My teacher, hearing me said, "How could you gather the sense so excellently within three hours, which I failed to explain to you in three days?". After that, every day, I began to read chapter after chapter, with great ease. Through concentration of mind everything can be accomplished – even mountains can be crushed to atoms.

In Malabar......the women lead in everything. Exceptional cleanliness is apparent everywhere, and there is the great impetus to learning. When I myself was in that country, I met many women who spoke good Sanskrit, while in the rest of India, not one woman in a million can speak it.

Once while I was putting up at Manmatha Babu's place (in Madras), I dreamt one night that my mother had died. My mind became much distracted. Not to speak of correspondence with anybody at home, I used to send no letters in those days even to our Math, (at Baranagore). The dream being disclosed to Manmatha, he sent a wire to Calcutta to ascertain facts about the matter. For the dream had made my mind uneasy on the
one hand, and on the other, our Madras friends with all arrangements ready, were insisting on my departing for America immediately, and I felt rather unwilling to leave before getting any news of my mother. So Manmatha, who discerned this state of my mind suggested our repairing to a man living some way off from town, who having acquired mystic powers over spirits could tell fortunes, and read the past and future of man's life. So at Manmatha's request and to get rid of my mental suspense, I agreed to go to this man. Covering the distance partly by railway and partly on foot, we four of us - Manmatha, Alasinga, myself and another - managed to reach the place, and what met our eyes there was a man with ghoulish, haggard, sootblack appearance, sitting close to a cremation ground. His attendents used some Madrassi dialect to explain to us that this was the man with perfect power over the ghosts. At first, the man took absolutely no notice of us, and then, when we were about to retire from the place, he made a request to us to wait.

Our Alasinga was acting as the interpreter and he explained the request to us. Next, the man commenced drawing some figures with a pencil, and presently I found him getting perfectly still in mental concentration. Then, he began to give out my name, my genealogy, the history of my long line of forefathers, and said that Sri Ramakrishna was keeping close to me all through my wanderings, intimating also to me good news about my mother. He also foretold that I would have to go very soon to far-off lands for preaching religion. Getting good news thus about my mother, we all travelled back to town, and after arrival there, received by wire from
Calcutta the assurance of mother's doing well. Everything that the man had foretold came to be fulfilled to the letter, call it some fortuitous occurrence or anything you will.

I know very little of this science (of mind); but for the little that I gained, I worked for thirty years of my life, and for six years I have been telling people the little that I know. It took me thirty years to learn it; thirty years of hard struggle. Sometimes I worked at it twenty-hours during the twenty-four. Sometimes I slept only one hour in the night; sometimes I worked whole nights; sometimes I lived in places where there was hardly a sound, hardly a breath: sometimes I had to live in caves. Think of that. And yet I know little or nothing. I have barely touched the hem of the garment of this science. But, I can understand that it is true and vast and wonderful.

I have met some who told me they did remember their previous life. They had reached a point where they could remember their former incarnations.

When I became a Sannyasin I consciously took the step, knowing that this body would have to die of starvation. What of that, I am a beggar. My friends are poor. I love the poor, I welcome poverty. I am glad that I sometimes have to starve.

In the course of my wanderings, I was in a certain place where people came to me in crowds and asked for instruction. Though it seems almost unbelievable, people came and made me talk for three days and nights without
giving me a moment’s rest. They did not even ask me whether I had eaten. On the third night, when all the
visitors had left, a low caste poor man came up to me and
said, “Swamiji, I am much pained to see that you have
not had any food these three days. You must be very
tired and hungry. Indeed, I have noticed that you have
not even taken a glass of water!” I thought that the
Lord Himself had come in the form of this low caste man
to test me. I asked him, “Can you give me something to
eat?” The man said, “Swamiji, my heart is yearning to
give you food; but how can you eat chapaties baked by
my hands; if you allow me, I shall be most glad to bring
flour, lentils, and other things and you may cook them
yourself.” At that time, according to the monastic rules,
I did not touch fire. So I said to him, “You had better
give me the chapaties cooked by you. I will gladly take
them.” Hearing this, the man shrank in fear; he was a
subject of the Maharajah of Khetri and was afraid that
if the latter came to hear that he, a cobbler, had given
Chapatis to a Sannyasin, he would be severely dealt with
and possibly banished from the State. I told him,
however, that he need not fear and the Maharajah would
not punish him. He did not believe me. But out of the
kindness of his heart, even though he feared the conse-
quence, he brought me the cooked food. I doubted at
that time whether it would have been more palatable if
Indra, a King of the Devas, should have held a cup of
nectar in a golden basin before me. I shed tears of love
and gratitude and thought, “Thousands of such large-
hearted men live in lowly huts, and we despise them as
low castes and untouchables.” When I became well
acquainted with the Maharajah, I told him of the noble act of this man. Accordingly, within a few days the latter was called to the presence of the prince. Frightened beyond words, the man came shaking all over, thinking that some dire punishment was to be inflicted upon him. But the Maharajah praised him and put him beyond all want.

O, the days of suffering I passed through! Once after eating nothing for three days, I fell down senseless on the road. I did not know how long I was in that state. When I regained my consciousness I found my clothing wet through a shower of rain. Drenched in it, I felt somewhat refreshed. I arose, and after trudging along some distance, I reached a monastery, and my life was saved by the food I received there.

I find that whenever I have made a mistake in my life, it has always been because self entered into the calculation; where self has not been involved, my judgement has gone straight to the mark.

I had from before a desire to go to Chicago. When at Madras, the people there of their own accord, in conjunction with the H. H. of Mysore and Ramnad, made every arrangement to send me up...Between the H. H. of Khetri and myself there exist the closest ties of love. Well, I, as a matter of course, wrote to him that I was going to America. Now the Raja of Khetri thought in his love that I was bound to see him once before I departed, especially as the Lord gave him an heir to the throne and great rejoicings were going on there...and to
make sure of my coming he sent his Private Secretary all the way to Madras to fetch me.

There were my Gurubhais at Junagad...Of them one is our leader. I met them after three years and we came together as far as Abu and then I left them.

Margoa: 1893 - I reached here safe. I went to visit Panjim and a few other villages and temples nearby. I returned just today. I have given up the intention of visiting Gokarna, Mahabaleswar and other places. I start for Dharwar by the morning train tomorrow. Doctor Yogdekar’s friend was very hospitable to me. The town of Panjim is very neat and clean. Most of the Christians here are literate. The Hindus are mostly uneducated.

You see, in my travels through India all these years, I have come across many a great soul, many a heart overflowing with loving kindness, sitting at their feet I used to feel a mighty current of strength coursing into my heart, and the few words I tell you are only through the force of that current gained by coming in contact with them. Do not think I am myself something great!

Abu: 30-4-91 - The two Commander Sahebs...being men of high position were very kind to a poor Fakir like me.

Baroda: 26-4-92- I had not the least difficulty in reaching the house (of Sri Haridas Viharidas Desai, Dewan of Junagad) from the station of Nadiad...Mr. Manibhai has provided every comfort for me...As to his company, I have only seen him twice; once for a minute
and the other for 10 minutes at the most when he talked about the system of education here. Of course, I have seen the library and the pictures of Ravi Varma and that is about all worth seeing here. So, I am going off this evening to Bombay... At Nadiad, I met Mr. Manilal Nanubhai. He is a very learned and pious gentleman and I enjoyed his company much.

Poona: 15-6-92 - I came down with the Thakore Saheb of Mahabaleshwar and I am living here with him. I would remain here a week or more and then proceed to Rameshwar via Hyderabad......I saw the Surti tutor to the Prince of Bhavnagar - He is a perfect gentleman. It was quite a privilege to make his acquaintance, he is so good and noble-natured a man.

Bombay: 22-8-92 - Yesterday I saw Mr. Manahashukharam who has lodged a Sannyasi friend with him. He is very kind to me and so is his son... After remaining here for 15 or 20 days I would proceed towards Rameshwar.

Hyderabad: 21-2-93 - A young graduate came to receive me at the station, and also a Bengali gentleman, At present I am living with the Bengali gentleman; (father of late Sarojini Naidu-Dr. Aghorenath Chatterjee) tomorrow, I go to live with the young friend for a few days and then I see the different sights here, and in a few days expect to be at Madras......I cannot bear heat at all. So the next thing I would do would be to go back to Bangalore and then to Ootacamund to pass the summer there. My brain boils in heat.
So all my plans have been dashed to the ground. That is why I wanted to hurry off from Madras early. In that case, I would have months left in my hands to seek for somebody amongst our northern princes to send me over to America. But alas, it is now too late. First, I cannot wander about in this heat - I would die. Secondly, my fast friends in Rajputana would keep me bound down to their sides if they get hold of me and would not let me go over to Europe. So my plan was to get hold of some new person without my friend's knowledge. But this delay at Madras has dashed all my hopes to the ground, and with a deep sigh, I give it up and the Lord's will be done! "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, for Thine is the glory and the Kingdom for ever and ever.

**Khetri: 27-4-93** - As to my taking ship I have already made arrangements from Bombay......The Raja or my Gurubhais would be the last men to put any obstacles in my way......As for the Rajaji, his love for me is simply without limit.

**Khetri: 28-4-93** - I am shortly going back to Bombay, say in 20 days......Here the Khetri Rajaji was very, very anxious to see me and sent his Private Secretary to Madras; and so I was bound to leave for Khetri. But the heat is quite intolerable and so, I am flying off very soon... I have made the acquaintances of nearly all the Dakshini Rajas and have seen most queer sights in many places...I saw Ratilalbhai in the train. He is the same nice and kind gentleman.
Bombay: 22-5-93 - Reached Bombay a few days ago and would start off in a few days......The Private Secretary to H.H. of Khetri and I are now residing together. I cannot express my gratitude to him for his love and kindness to me. He is what they call a Tazimi Sardar in Rajaputana, i.e., one of those whom the Rajas receive by rising from their seats. Still he is so simple and sometimes his service for me makes me almost ashamed.

The companionship of the holy and the wise is one of the main elements of spiritual progress. –

- SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our Scriptures, in our Puranas – must be brought out from the books and scattered broadcast all over the land. –

- SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.