CHAPTER XVII

OUTER WORSHIP

The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra says: "The highest state is that in which the presence of Brahman is perceived in all things. The middle state is that of meditation. The lowest state is that of hymn and Japa,¹ and the state lower than the lowest is that of external worship.² Yoga is realization or the accomplishment of Unity between Jiva and Paramātma. Worship is based on the twofold knowledge that He is Iśvara, and I am His servant but for him who has known that everything is Brahman there is neither Yoga nor worship."

The Niruttara Tantra says: "Mental worship is superior, and external worship is inferior. By worshipping Devatā a Sādhaka is himself honoured. Japa, without a doubt, leads to Siddhi in Mantra, and Homa leads to Siddhi in all things; for this reason a Sādhaka should perform all these three things—namely, Worship, Japa, and Homa. "O Kuleśvarī!³ Sādhakas following the Virācāra and Divyācāra ⁴ are competent for mental worship—that is to say, they alone are competent to perform mental without outer worship."

Similarly, other Tantras also have described external worship as being of a lower kind. It is these statements and authorities which have nowadays appeared in the society of common people like a mighty comet threatening untimely dissolution, and this is why people, proud of their philosophical knowledge, are most averse and even opposed to external worship. They are strongly of opinion that outer worship is worse than the worst, so that its performance is degrading, or that the most degraded persons only will perform it. Why, then, should they perform it? We, too, admit that outer worship is inferior; but we ask, To what is it inferior? Is it inferior to spiritual knowledge, or to meditation, or to Japa and hymn, or to that which they themselves do, abandoning all these?

It is true that outer worship belongs to the lowest order of competence, but what sublimity have you reached that you can turn up your nose at

¹ That is, external ceremonial worship as opposed to inner mental worship.
² Repetition of Mantra (see Introduction to Tantra Sūtra).
³ Mistress of the Tāntrik Kaulas.
⁴ The two Tāntrik Āstras above Paśuṣcāra.
the very mention of it? To write Ka-Kha¹ in a primary school is no
doubt the lowest stage in education, but do you think you will become a
great Rṣi, proficient in all Śāstras, without having first acquired a knowl-
dge of letters? If anyone has ever acquired proficiency in all Śāstras, it is
because of his writing of Ka-Kha under the Guru-Mahāśaya.² Similarly,
if anyone has ever acquired competence in spiritual knowledge, know that
he has done so by virtue of external worship. It is true that the student
leaves the primary school for the Tol³ or the college, but it is certain that
he does not leave behind him Ka-Kha.⁴ When Ka-Kha has become
firmly and indelibly impressed in their minds for all life, it is then that
boys enter the boundless sea of Śāstra on the craft of that same Ka-Kha.
Similarly, when, in course of the Sādhana of the lotus-feet of the Supreme
Devatā in external worship in the primary school of the Supreme Guru,
meditation and concentration become natural to a Sādhaka, it is then
that he enters the sea of eternal knowledge and crosses to the other side of
existence with the help of the craft of those fear-dispelling Feet. The
relation between the Sādhana of Mahāvidyā⁶ and the worship of the
Devatā, whose substance is the Mantra given by the Guru, is similar to
that which exists between the cultivation⁷ of Vidyā⁸ and the writing of
Ka-Kha under Guru-Mahāśaya. Whatever Śāstra you may attempt to
learn, the Mantra of Ka-Kha will take you safely through all difficulty.
However vast the sea of Śāstra may be, Ka-Kha will carry you across it.
Similarly, however vast be the domain of Jñāna, Yoga, and Samādhi⁹
may be, the great Devatā, who is Mantra, will assume form, take you by
the hand, and carry you across it. I shall see that the Mother, the Iśvari
of all, with dishevelled hair, whose substance is bliss, is joyously laughing
and dancing in Jñāna, Yoga, Samādhi,⁸ or in whatever else I may think
or do, and that such untiring dance is raising waves of love in the sea of
my knowledge. You are mistaken, O brother! From whom have you
heard that I have anything in this Samsāra, be it Sādhana, prayer,¹⁰ medi-
tation,¹¹ knowledge,¹² enjoyment,¹³ or liberation,¹⁴ in which the Mother is
not? In my Sādhana is the Mother; in the object of my Sādhana is the
Mother; in my Siddhi is the Mother; and in the object which I get by
Siddhi is the Mother. She is at the beginning, at the middle, at the end,

¹ That is, A B C. Ka-Kha being the first two letters of the Sanskrit
alphabet. ² The teacher in a primary school.
³ Orthodox Sanskrit school.
⁴ He does not unlearn all that he had learnt before.
⁵ Supreme spiritual knowledge.
⁶ Sādhana.
⁷ The lower knowledge.
⁸ Literally, 'Of the Tattva of Jñāna,' etc.
⁹ Spiritual knowledge.
¹⁰ Bhajana.
¹¹ Dhyāna.
¹² Jñāna.
¹³ Bhakti.
¹⁴ Mukti.
and beyond the end. Know that that which remains when all is gone is the Mother only. When there are none left to call the Mother "Mother," know that then, also, there will be the Mother only. For the Mother is my Mother as well as my son’s Mother, my father’s Mother, my mother’s Mother, and even Her own Mother; so that when all else is lost, there will remain the Mother, the Mother, the Mother! When will that day come on which, losing all we possess, we ourselves shall be like corpses and see the Mother only?

Nowadays numbers of precedents and authorities are being collected for the abolition of external worship. Someone writing on the life of Rāmaprāśāda ¹ says: “Did he worship the earthen Kālī? Never.” He said: “The fierce-visaged Devī in the temple of the heart-lotus,” as if Rāmaprāśāda’s Kālī was never wont to issue from himself, or as if the Kālī of those who worship Her earthen image never appears in their heart-lotuses. The expression “earthen Kālī” itself is ridiculous, ² brother critic! Even the earthen Kālī is of real worth; but it is a matter of lasting regret that being a man of flesh and bone you have become earthen and of no worth. We know not when Fortune will smile on you so that the Mother will show Herself in and through earth; when you will understand that although earth is earth, there is no lack of the Mother in it! Rāmaprāśāda says: “Hundreds of true Vedas say that my Tārā is without form.” Out of the thousand songs of Rāmaprāśāda only this much has been quoted; not even one whole song, but only that portion of it in which the word “without form” occurs, as if Rāmaprāśāda says on oath: “Everything else that I have said is falsehood; only the portion ‘My Tārā is without form’ is pure truth”; and, as if the following passages were mere raving fantasy or senseless talk, the only sensible statement being that which speaks of the Devī as being “without form”.

**Song**

“O Mother, how Thou didst dance in battle!
Incomparable is Thy garment,
Loose is Thine hair,
Naked art Thou on Hara’s breast.
How Thou didst dance in battle!
Who is that dark Lady? ³
Her colour is like crushed collyrium,
Her face is like the circle of the autumnal moon,

¹ The celebrated Bengali poet and Tāntrik.
² For Kālī cannot be earthen. ³ Śyāmā.
Her tresses are loosely flowing,
Her body is splashed with blood;
She shines like a freshly-formed cloud streaked with lightning!
O who is that Charmer of mind—that Charmer of mind?
Like a mass of molten lightning is She.
Her beauty shines like gems and rubies.
O who is that Charmer of mind?
With a swaying gait, who comes there?
Her tresses are loose, and She is stirred by wine,
She moves fast in battle,
Seizes those who surround me,
Holds elephants in the hollow of Her hand;
Ah! who is that Dark Lady coming there?
Who is She, young and naked,
And yet devoid of shame?
She charms the world.
What unseemly conduct for a lady of respectable family!
Her gait is like that of an elephant,
She is intoxicated with wine,
Her tongue is lolling,
Her hair is loose,
The sight of Her makes men and Devas fear Her.
Roaring She crushes Dānavas.

O critic! wonderful indeed is the impartiality of your criticism! Rāmaprasāda during his lifetime was seldom heard to speak of the formless. It was only when, after having worshipped the Devi, whose substance is consciousness in her image of Earth in the dead of the new moon night, he, on the following morning, went to throw that image of the Mother of the world into water, and after having placed the Mother's image on the bank of the Ganges, descended into the water until it reached his waist—it was then that the Mother's son stood before the Mother as "belonging only to the Mother"; then, keeping his eyes fixed on the Mother's image without, he went into Samādhi, having made the Samsāra Mudrā, and called the Mother within from without. Then immediately the Mother, the treasure of, and dweller in the heart, and subduer of Death, knowing the approaching end of the son's play, appeared all full of smiles in his

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1 Apparently referring to man's sins.
2 Āsavaṇevaśa.
3 Sons of Danu; enemies of the Devas.
4 Trance; ecstasy.
5 The Mudrā of dissolution which is done when the life is taken from the image.
6 Līlā; here his sojourn on earth.
heart. The fear-dispelling look of the Blissful Devi dispelled the fear of existence. The dance of love of the Dancing Kālı opened the door of his heart. His body, tired with the overflowing bliss of love, began to lose all self-control. His eyes, closed with bliss, filled with tears; then it was that, bringing to an end his beloved Sādhana, the Sādhaka sang to his heart's content for the last time in his life to the ringing chords of his heart:

"The black cloud rises in the sky within.
With joy the mind-peacock \(^1\) dances and plays.
The clouds, with rumbling sound, say, "Fear not,"
The soft smile of the bliss of love is like the beauty lightning therein.
Fixed is the Sādhaka's gaze.
From the eyes tears flow incessantly wherewith the thirst and fear of the heart-cātaka \(^2\) are soon removed.
After this birth comes the next birth, and then many, many births.
But Rāmaprasāda says: 'There will be no more births for him in the womb.'"

Notwithstanding his achievement he still hankered for the Mother. In fact, the certain knowledge that "there will be no more birth in the womb" increases such hankering a hundredfold; and then, feeling unbearable pain at the prospect of being separated from the sight of the Mother of the world, the Sādhaka, whose life was in the Mother, again fell at Her feet and, weeping piteously, said:

"Will such a day come, O Tārā! a day on which tears will stream from my eyes, when I will cry, 'Tārā, Tārā, Tārā!' \(^3\)
My heart-lotus will be fully blown.
The mind's darkness will be dispelled, and then I shall fall and roll on the earth, and be beside myself, crying, 'Tārā!' \(^4\)
I shall forsake all distinction.
My mind's sorrow will be destroyed.
O! hundreds of true Vedas say that my Tārā is 'without form'.
Śrī Rāmaprasāda says 'The Mother dwells in all bodies.
O blinded eye! see, the Mother is in darkness the dispeller of darkness.'"

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\(^{1}\) Referring to the play of the peacock under cloudy skies.

\(^{2}\) A bird which is said to live on the raindrop.

\(^{3}\) Title of the Devi as "Saviour".
O Tārā! when will the day come on which you will be without form? The day on which the heart-lotus will be fully blown and the mind’s darkness will be dispelled.

Then I shall be beside myself, and falling on the earth, cry, “Tārā!”

On the day on which I shall forsake all distinctions and my mind’s sorrow will be destroyed, on that day hundreds of true Vedas will say, “My Tārā is without form,” and then only will the Vedic saying, “Tārā is without form,” become true for me.

On the day on which this form of mine will vanish, on that same day my Tārā also will be formless. Tārā will not really be without form, but will be so for me. This is what Rāmaprasāda means to say, because it is the state of possession of form by me which leads to my worship of Her.

On the day on which this form of mine will vanish and I shall merge in Her great liberation aspect,¹ whose substance is consciousness, on that day, as I shall be without form, so my Tārā also will be without form. Then will be the due time for the realization of the truth that Tārā is without form, according to the teaching of the Veda; then, with the loss of power to perceive my own individuality, I shall also lose the power to perceive the Tārāhood of Tārā—that is, the fact that She is possessed of form or individuality.² If, therefore, there is any possibility of Tārā ever being to me without form, it will be on that day; but, so long as I possess my own individuality, or so long as I am I, my Tārā also is undoubtedly Tārā, possessed of form and Mother.

Now tell me, is Rāmaprasāda, called Tārā, possessed of form or formless? You want to quote the authority of Rāmaprasāda, but we are greatly sorry that you do not feel that it will be long before you can understand what Rāmaprasāda has said. There is another thing which I want to ask you: Is it because you look upon Rāmaprasāda as your Guru that you quote his words as authority, or because he happened to say something to your liking that you are disposed to quote his authority? or, do you want to draw people to your party without understanding and misunderstanding what Rāmaprasāda has said? Do you wish to steal the whole of the beginning and end of what Rāmaprasāda has said, and then to frighten them by a quotation from the middle of a single passage, without citing that which precedes or follows it? If you look upon Rāmaprasāda as your Guru and follow his teachings, why, out of his thousand sayings, have you quoted only the passage, “Hundreds of true Vedas say my Tārā is formless?” From the fact that you have done so, it appears that there is a secret connection of some formless love between you and that which is “without form.” Here you have shown yourself to be partial, so that

¹ Kaivalya.
² Literally, “She-ness”.
³ Nirākāra—undefined. Here unsubstantial, fancied.
how can you escape? In order to give a judgment as an umpire on any matter one must be careful to observe the strictest neutrality. How can the interest of the public be safe where your actions are guided by selfish motives? You who seek to establish that the Deity is without form! It is a nice question which you have raised; no one objects to it. But the question is, How is it that while out of a thousand songs you have picked out an expression which occurs only once in them, you have yet, out of those thousand songs containing thousands of references to the Deity possessing form, not selected a single one of such references? Of course, there is no doubt that that which possesses form is immensely heavier than that which is without form ¹ and is a burden for most people. How can you alone bear the weight of Her whom all the inhabitants of the universe, composed of three worlds, have joined together in bearing for all time? As your body is fine, your mind is fine, and your worship is fine; so, by good fortune, the Devatā whom you worship is also fine, extremely fine—in fact, destitute of form. The weight of such a Devatā is enough for you; but still, in spite of the fact that you find the weight of a Devatā possessing form to be unbearable, you have not done well in suppressing the fact of the existence of that unbearable weight. If you could yourself raise it, you ought at least to have pointed out that, whilst Rāmaprasāda spoke a thousand times of the Devatā as possessing form, he only once spoke of the Devatā as being formless; but such a saying was not for you and I, or for even Rāmaprasāda himself. It was for the stage at which the individuality of Rāmaprasāda vanished, and the relation of worshipper and worshipped was past.

Śri Rāmaprasāda says: “The Mother dwells in all bodies. Blinded eyes! see, the Mother is in darkness the dispeller of darkness.” The Mother is present in all things; but it is regrettable that you, whose eyes have been blinded by the darkness of ignorance, do not see Her for want of the sight of knowledge, and it is a matter for great regret that, although the Mother is the dispeller of darkness, you do not see Her in the darkness. It is true that the sun and the moon dispel the darkness of the world, but they cannot dispel the darkness which enshrouds a blind man.

Unfortunately, a blind man differs greatly from those possessing eyesight. A blind man is himself wanting in eyesight, through the fault of the Karma done by him in previous births.² Had it been darkness from without, the sun’s rays could have dispelled it. But the darkness inherent in the blind man’s eyes is due to the want of vital power; no external cause has brought about this want. It is an internal cause which has induced

¹ Here possessed of form = substantial, not possessed of form = unsubstantial.
² Cf. the New Testament: “Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parent that he was born blind?”
it in me, and the name of this cause is misfortune. If, now, I can destroy this misfortune by doing such acts as bring good fortune, if, by the grace of Devatā, I get back my eyesight, then only I shall first see that the Mother is the destroyer of darkness even in the darkness, and next, being myself freed from all darkness, I shall see the Mother Herself fully. For, just as the Sun cannot be seen unless its power of dispelling darkness is seen, or a lamp cannot be seen unless its light is seen, or the lightning cannot be seen unless its flash is seen; so, despite the fact that the Mother is all Śaktis, She cannot be seen unless Her Śakti becomes manifest. She is eternal knowledge and bliss. Who can perceive Her omnipresence without the light of Her knowledge? True, the Mother is the destroyer of darkness, but then I am blind through the fault of my Karma. This darkness of mine is not from without; it is the inner darkness. The Śadhaka says I need not be afraid on this account, for just as this darkness is within, so are the sun and moon which will illumine it. She rises in the inmost recess of that which is within, so that that which is inner darkness in respect of the outer world is outer darkness in respect to Her who is within the inmost recess of the heart, and darkness flees afar from the fear-dispelling Śakti of Her refulgent rays. In order, therefore, to obtain the protection of the Mother of the world, whose glances are like infinite millions of suns and moons, we must leave the domain of darkness and attain the lunar region; and if one lives even in the darkness of Pātāla, the rays of Her mercy make that region shine as though it were that of the moon. This is why, although you are blind within, you should know that even this “within” is without when compared with the place where She resides. This, too, is why, in spite of his knowledge that his eyes are blind, Rāmaprasāda says: “Blind eyes see the Mother. For although you are blind in the dark She is the destroyer of darkness,” and the moment his darkness will be destroyed you will see that “the Mother dwells in all bodies”. In fact, although Rāmaprasāda had been in the past a blind Jiva, he was not blind when he said this. It was with reference to the blindness of his past life that he says “blinded eyes”. What he sees now elates him with joy, and he gives expression to it when he says: “See the Mother is in darkness, the destroyer of darkness.” There is no more fear of darkness. The destroyer of darkness has come. Hence, look while there is yet time, “the Mother dwells in the bodies.”

“Will such a day come, O Tārā!” This piteous prayer of Rāmaprasāda’s heart is to-day being heard and fulfilled by Tārā Herself, who stands before him. Men see that Rāmaprasāda has to-day brought the Mother to the bank of the Ganges to throw Her away, but the Mother

1 The nether world.
2 After worship of the image it is thrown into the sacred river.
see that Rāmaprasāda has to-day brought the Mother to the bank of the Ganges in order that he may throw himself away.\[^{1}\]

In order to bring the worldly play of the worldly Rāmaprasāda to an end, in order that She may take up to Her bosom Her most beloved child, and conclude with Daksīṇā \[^{2}\] the worldly sacrifice of Her devoted son, Daksīṇā \[^{3}\] Herself has to-day appeared in the visible image. Even through that image, which has been abandoned by means of Mantra,\[^{4}\] Her inner advent has been revealed. The waves of light of Her whose substance is light have mingled with the waves of the Ganges, and with them have swelled the waves of the love of Rāmaprasāda, who has seen Vārāṇaśī \[^{5}\] in water, on land, and in the heavens. "To him who dies in Kāśi," \[^{6}\] Śiva says, "Thou art That. Above my 'Thou art That' is the Queen of Maheśa." "Why should I live in places of pilgrimage?" Many a Gayā, Gangā, and Vārāṇaśī \[^{7}\] I shall see under Śyāmā's feet. What need have I for Kāśi? \[^{8}\] The lotus-feet of Kāli are the equal of innumerable places of pilgrimage." These old sayings have to-day become true.

"The day on which tears will stream from my eyes as I will cry, 'Tārā, Tārā, Tārā!' " Presently I shall be beside myself, and, falling, roll on the earth, crying, 'Tārā!' " When such a day truly came, by the grace of the Mother who is the Saviour of the poor, the refulgent light of the black beauty of the cloud-like black Devī, the charmer of Kāla,\[^{9}\] made day and night one and the same. The three worlds sank in the playing waves of that beauty. The dark son of the dark youthful Mother at last reached the shore, which is the Mother's bosom, after having swum through the ocean of time. The child of Kāli, opening the temple of the heart, and bringing therein the Mother from without, shaking the bank of the Ganges with the deep and loud cry of the name of Kāli, the conqueror of Kāla,\[^{10}\] and offering his life as an oblation in the Kāli Pūjā on the illumined new moon night, at last slept in Kāli bosom. The worship of Bhavānī \[^{11}\] ended with Rāmaprasāda's life-play,\[^{12}\] and he died without having to perform the ceremony in which the image is thrown away. We say: "Oh, the Mother's blessed beloved son! Truly had you learnt

\[^{1}\] In death.
\[^{2}\] The present made to the officiating priest at the conclusion of the sacrifice (Yajña).
\[^{3}\] A name of the Devī as the "favourable one".
\[^{4}\] At the conclusion of worship the Devī is let depart from the image by the Visarjana Mantra and Samhāra Mudrā.
\[^{5}\] Kāśī or Benares.
\[^{6}\] Tirtha.
\[^{7}\] Śiva, death or time.
\[^{8}\] The Devī as spouse of Śiva in his form as Bhāva.
\[^{9}\] Bhavaśilā or life.
how to bid the Mother depart by means of the Samhāra Mudrā ¹ after you had worshipped Her! and blessed art Thou, O Mother Bengal! Truly good teaching hast Thou given to Thy child. A marvellous teaching in the Mahāmantra of Mahāvidyā didst Thou impart to Rāmaprasāda by the grace of which even that which he earned ² in the work of throwing away the image became endless, wasteless, and unfailing both in this world and hereafter.

“T-o-day hundreds of thousands of the poor who walked the road in India enjoy as masters the spiritual wealth of these earnings of Rāmaprasāda. Victory to Thee, O Mother! Victory to Thy Prasāda!” ³

The Sādhaka will now understand in what way Rāmaprasāda’s Tārā was formless. Rāmaprasāda called Tārā formless at a time and on a day when he himself was no longer Rāmaprasāda. At present it has become very easy to the community of Asuras ⁴ to call Tārā formless by taking up the note which Rāmaprasāda sounded at the time of his Samādhi ⁵ in Parabrahma. The very mention of the name of Tārā possessing form makes the hearts of Asuras tremble. Their community can find no rest unless Tārā becomes formless. Nevertheless, the precedent of Rāmaprasāda is not acceptable so long as one does not oneself realize the Videha Kaivalya ⁶ which Rāmaprasāda attained. Rāmaprasāda became himself formless immediately upon his calling Tārā formless, whilst the more these men cry out, “Without form! Without form!” day and night, the more do their own forms grow. What sort of formlessness is this?

While an effort is being made to prove that Rāmaprasāda’s Tārā was without form, and that he did not believe in the Deity possessing form, it is also said that, as if urged by a presentiment of approaching death, he worshipped Kālī, and on the next day, at the time of throwing away the image, he was standing in the Ganges with the water reaching to his waist, and was singing the last song of his life, when his Brahmārandhra ⁷ burst open, and he died.

People nowadays say that he did not die of any disease, but that excess of emotion ⁸ caused his death. What a strange conclusion this is of the messenger of Kālī! ⁹ Rāmaprasāda did not believe in the Deity

¹ The Mudrā, signifying dissolution, used with the Visarjana Mantra.
² The spiritual merit earned.
³ Prasāda may be a shortened form of Rāmaprasāda’s name, or may be “grace”—probably the first.
⁴ Enemies of the Gods; here inimically disposed men, their types, on earth.
⁵ Ecstatic union with the Brahman.
⁶ Liberation by union with the Paramātmā.
⁷ Opening in the centre of the crown of the head through which the Prāṇa in the Yogi escapes at death.
⁸ Bhāva.
⁹ The Kali age personified.
possessing form, but when he felt the approach of death he worshipped Kāli in an image possessing form, and on the next day died while preparing to throw away the worshipped image. If he did not believe in the Deity possessing form, was it through fear of death that he worshipped Kāli in the image? If so, the critic ought to have understood that, whether during our lifetime we believe or do not believe in the Deity possessing form, we should so believe at the time of death, since even such a man as Rāmaprasāda had to believe it then. It was only when Rāmaprasāda became fully enabled to feel an unembodied presence that he said only once and from his own standpoint: "My Tārā is without form." Ah! how charming! What an incomparable unfailing power does the love of Sādhana proceeding from the heart yield, so that, even when "without form," "Tārā is mine"! Despite being "without form," my Tārā is still "Tārā"! It is not the intention of the Sādhaka to say that the embodied character of Tārā will be lost in Her unembodied presence. He means: "My embodied Tārā will then drown me in the sea of Her unembodied presence. I shall lose my own self, and be completely merged in Hers." Just as a child sleeps in its mother's arms under the fold of her dress, so I shall be lost in the formless liberating 1 womb of my Mother who is possessed of form, and holds the infinite universe within Herself. Beyond this, in his state of Sādhana, he did not perceive this unembodied presence. On the contrary, he has distinctly stated that it is impossible for even Yogīs (not to speak of himself or common folk) to perceive an unembodied presence. Referring to that aspect of Devatā which is Mantra, Rāmaprasāda has said:

"Doubtless Kāla 2 destroys the infinite universe.
But the terrible mouth 3 grasps that Kāla.
For this reason Thou art called Kāli, O Nārāyaṇī!
And yet Thou art called the Lady of Kāla. 4
All Jīvas meditate on the Guru in the Brahmarandhra, 5
And Sadāśīva 6 is a great Yogī through meditation on the form of Kāli.
Truly the fifty letters 7 form the substance of Veda and Āgama.
But it is hard for even a Yogī to contemplate the formless aspect.
Thou hast no form, Aksara 8 is Thy form.
O Thou whose substance is Guṇas! Thou has taken forms according to the different Guṇas.

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1 Kaivalya.
2 Of Kāli.
3 That is here, the head.
4 Death, time.
5 Siva.
6 Siva as the Guru.
7 Varnas.
8 Written characters.
Veda says that Kaivalya is attained by worshipping the formless Deity.
To me, this notion seems wrong, and the effect of lightness of intellect.
Prasāda says the mind ever seeks the Black Beauty.
Do as Thou dost wish. Who wants Nirvāṇa?"

At this point the critic opens the chest of his learning and intellect, and becomes senseless and restless with brimming joy on hearing the verse: "Veda says that Kaivalya is attained by worshipping the formless Deity." The words, however, "Veda says that Kaivalya is attained by worshipping the formless Deity," are not Rāmaprasāda's. We have here merely a worthless vocation of arrogant men wanting in all Śādhana. Rāmaprasāda has, in fact, protested against it, and said: "To me this notion seems wrong, the effects of lightness of intellect." This portion only contains Rāmaprasāda's own view. To those who say that there can be no liberation without absorption in the formless Deity (why to them alone, to even Her who grants liberation?), Rāmaprasāda replies with a frown: "Prasāda says, the mind ever seeks the Black Beauty. Do as Thou dost wish. Who wants Nirvāṇa?" If Nirvāṇa liberation cannot be attained without a realization of Thy unembodied presence, never mind. What harm if it is not attained? Who wants Nirvāṇa liberation if He gets Thee? "Do as Thou dost wish." Thou mayest or mayest not grant liberation. The mind, however, will not seek anything besides the Black Beauty. Those who eagerly seek their liberation without Her have no claim to Her boundless, infinite, unfathomable, deep, and pure love and devotion. This is what Rāmaprasāda has clearly said in the following song:

"What need have I for Kāli?
Kāli's lotus-feet are the equal of places of pilgrimage innumerable.
When I meditate upon these Feet in the heart-lotus I swim in a sea of bliss.

Just as fire burns a mass of cotton,
So the name of Kāli destroys all sins.
A headless man can have no headache.
Men discharge their debt to the forefathers by offering pīṇḍas at Gayā.

But it makes me laugh to hear of the performance of Śrāddha at Gayā.

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1 See this explained post. He loves the Mother so much that he would rather continue to be Her worshipper than be that which is worshipped.
2 Laya.
3 Pitris.
4 Balls of food.
5 Obsequial rites done in reverence of the Pitris at the town of Gayā. The meaning is that the worshipper of Kāli gets liberation, and therefore it is not necessary for his children to offer Śrāddha.
For him who has meditated on Kāli,
Death at Kāli brings liberation.
True this is Śiva’s saying,
But at the root of all is devotion,
And liberation is its maid,
What is gained by liberation?
Water mingles with water.
I love to eat sugar,
But it is not good to become it.
In amusement Prasāda says,
By the strength of the merciful Devī,
The fourfold fruit \(^1\) falls into the palms of him who contemplates
the Devī with dishevelled hair."

Not merely the seeking of Nirvāṇa liberation, but even its attainment,
is not desired. He has said: "I love to eat sugar, but it is not good to
become it." If by becoming sugar itself I am unable to taste sugar, then
why should I become sugar? Lest it should be replied that this is for the
cessation of the sorrows of Samsāra, Rāmaprasāda at once retorts that in
the realm in which he lives there is neither Samsāra nor sorrow. Let him
who is burdened with sorrow seek its cessation. "Why shall we speak of
liberation alone? The fourfold fruit \(^2\) falls into the palms of him who con-
templates the Devī with dishevelled hair." Only he who has experienced
it knows what it is to attain in meditation Her, the mere thought of whom
brings unasked the fourfold fruit.

Another passage on which the critics lay stress is the verse: "But it is
hard for even a Yogi to contemplate the formless aspect." Rāmaprasāda
has said it is hard to contemplate the formless aspect. The critic gives
high praise to this, and asks: "Can it be doubted that the higher the form
of worship, the more difficult it is?" meaning thereby that it was because
Rāmaprasāda belonged to a low order of worshippers that he found
himself in such a plight. The matter, however, is not one of insinuation
only. The critics plainly say: "It is a pity that Rāmaprasāda did not take
the right path (worship of the Devatā without form) from the very
beginning. Had he in his Śādhanā worked along this path from the very
beginning, we cannot say what depths he might not have attained" (as the
critic has done).\(^8\) Ah! how wonderful! The beauty of the temple of form-
lessness is as great as the splendour of the formless steps which lead to it!
But how could Rāmaprasāda have had such good fortune? When he came
to this Samsāra, the mine whence this gem has come had not yet been

\(^1\) Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Mokṣa (see Introduction to Tantra Sāstra).
\(^2\) That is, Dharma, Artha, and Kāma besides liberation.
\(^8\) Author’s parenthesis.
discovered. O critic! can you for a single moment shake off your heinous
and hellish malicious propensity and sit still? If so, I have one or two
important questions to ask you. Rāmaprāśāda has said: "But it is hard
for even a Yogi to contemplate the formless aspect." What does he mean
when he says this, and to what class of worshippers does he refer? Are you
able to understand it? The havoc you have made of Rāmaprāśāda’s song
surpasses description. We shall demonstrate in detail that in the sphere
of religion the preaching of a doctrine which it is not in our competence
to practise is nothing but a form of covert robbery.

"All Jivas meditate on the Guru in the Brahmarandhrā,¹
And Sadāśiva is a great Yogi through meditation on the form
of Kāli.
Truly the fifty letters form the substance of Veda and Āgama,
But it is hard for even a Yogi to contemplate the formless aspect.
Thou hast no form, Aksara² is Thy form.
O Thou whose substance is the Guṇas! Thou hast taken forms
according to different Guṇas."

Have you understood the meaning of the above? If you had, you
would not have made such a mess of it. "All Jivas meditate on the Guru
in the Brahmarandhrā.¹ And Sadāśiva is a great Yogi by meditation on
the form of Kāli." In order to understand this, it is necessary to become
initiated and instructed according to Śāstra by a Guru. "Truly the fifty
letters form the substance of Veda and Āgama, but it is hard for even a
Yogi to contemplate the formless aspect." It will be many ages³ before
you can understand the "but" between these two hemistiches. This
formlessness is not the unsightly misshapen formlessness of the nineteenth
century. It is the formless aspect. This much is the Śūtra.⁴ In the Vṛti ⁵
on this Śūtra the poet says: "Thou hast no form. Aksara² is Thy form";
and he further makes the comment: ⁶ "O Thou whose substance is the
Guṇas! Thou hast forms according to the different Guṇas." This deep
super-worldly truth ⁷ cannot be understood without special power acquired
by Śādhana. It is extremely ridiculous for you, uninitiated as you are,
to try to pass judgment on the play of Mantrasākti. It is just as though
a child in the womb were to make effort to fight a battle!

O critic! had you been initiated according to the Śāstra, instead of
being an "educated" man of the nineteenth century, we might have
found a cure for your error, but as matters stand, things must remain as
they are. It is the command issuing from the fair mouth of Viśvanātha

¹ Vide ante.
² Yugas.
³ Glossa.
⁴ Bhāṣya.
⁵ Written characters.
⁶ Aphorism.
⁷ Tattva.
Himself that this truth must not be revealed to those who are not competent to receive it. Hence, although Rāmaprasāda’s song is in the form of a Sūtra, we cannot scatter abroad its Vṛti, Bhāṣya, and Tīkā in the market, the public bathing-place, and the fields. This much, however, we tell you: Why do you make yourself ridiculous in the world of Sādhakas, and bring ruin on the ignorant community by interfering (though you have no competence for Sādhana) in matters which can be understood by Sādhana alone, and which, without Sādhana, cannot be realized by purely intellectual effort, however strenuous it be?

Rāmaprasāda was a seeker of the supreme object, and the critic seeks his selfish ends. The one is nectar, and the other poison; the one is heaven, and the other hell. How dare you desire to mix the two together? Covertly you have expressed your regret. “If only Rāmaprasāda in his Sādhana had worked along the right path from the very beginning!” Oh the arrogance of it befitting an Asura! Is it because you have seen your own face in the mirror that you have come to think that Rāmaprasāda was a Jīva from his birth blind, uninitiated, puzzled out of his wits, straying in a wrong path, and devoid of knowledge of the Śāstra? Being a trader in Rāmaprasāda’s name, and partaker of the leavings of his food, how dare you presume to show Rāmaprasāda the right path of Sādhana? You are seeking a means of livelihood for yourself in the Śāstra. Continue to seek that. Why trespass on Sādhana lying hidden in the womb of Śāstra? You have been attacked with the disease of formlessness; you may take a leap into the air; but why such braggadocio on your part, since Rāmaprasāda himself was not so diseased? The end of your Sādhana and Bhajana is malice against the Deity with form; but the end of Rāmaprasāda’s Sādhana and Bhajana was not malice against the Formless. But why should we mention Rāmaprasāda alone? No Sādhaka can have such a motive. It is precisely because Sādhakas understand formlessness that they say that it is impossible to perform Sādhana or Bhajana of the Formless. But those, who have on merely hearing the name of the Formless thought it to be a Delhi Laddu, cry out for worship of the Formless with flowers growing in the sky. For this reason, Śruti itself has said: “Those who say that they know Brahma, to them it is unknown; and those who say that they have not been able to know Brahma, to them

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1 Tattva.
2 Forms of commentary of greater or less degree of elaboration.
3 Sādhaka.
4 Paramārtha—that is, spiritual life and truth.
5 Svargā.
6 Naraka.
7 Worship.
8 A fabulous form of sweetmeat (Dead Sea apple) of Delhi which, while very tempting in appearance, is equally disappointing when eaten. It is said that he who has not tasted it is sorry, and he who has tasted it is sorry.
it is well known." Brahman is undefinable, because its real aspect cannot be given any particular definition. In fact, it is because the name of the Deity possessing form does not strike such terror in the heart of Brahman as it does in those of the community who are the standard-bearers of the Formless Brahman that worshippers of the Deity possessing form can entertain no malice against the Formless. However that may be, whether Rāmaprasāda was a worshipper of the Formless or of the Deity possessing form, we have no desire to hear from the mouth of a dealer in ginger information about ships.¹

Rāmaprasāda was not an African, European, or American. His life’s play began and ended in Bengal. We are his neighbours. If men, whether at home or abroad, want to hear of him, they must come to us for it. We shall never go to anybody else to learn about him. The chief part of Rāmaprasāda’s Śādhanā did not consist of singing in bands to the accompaniment of musical instruments, as is the case with the weekly-praying community.² He sank into the depths of the ocean of Śādhanā, and it was only at intervals of rest from Śādhanā performed in fixed Āsanās² that he was now and then moved by the breeze of emotion to sing his songs. To-day the miserable plight of the band of critics is due to their having fallen into the waves of this ocean in which they helplessly struggle. Proofs of Rāmaprasāda’s Śavaśādhanā, Citāśādhanā, Śaktisādhanā, rosary of Mahāśaṅkha, Bilvamila, and Pañcamudā, and other Āsanas,⁴ we still possess. The community of Śādhas is still resounding with the deep trumpet sound echoing from the sphere of spiritual competence in which Rāmaprasāda moved, and of the truth ⁵ for which he bore a madly impassioned love. If outsiders could realize this truth by the mere hearing of one or two simple songs, then thousands of critics could have become Rāmaprasādas in a single day. Guru was his guide, Śāstra itself was his lamp, the path of Śādhanā was the path he followed, and the Cintāmaṇī ⁶ region of the Mother of the world was that to which it led. As in every other work, so in songs also he followed the command of Śiva, and took

¹ A Bengali adage used with reference to a man who speaks on a subject of which he can have no knowledge.

² The Brāhmaṇas meet for prayer every Sunday in imitation of Christian worshippers.

³ Certain positions (Āsana) are assigned for worship.

⁴ Referring to various Tāntrik Śādhanās; with a corpse; on the funeral pyre; with a Śakti; rosary of human bone; five skulls; under a bael-tree; and other postures (Āsana).

⁵ Tattva.

⁶ Etymologically the word means "gem of thought". According to the Bhairavavāyāmaṇa, the supreme Abode of Devī is built of Chintāmaṇi stone. This is the supreme region.
the name of Śiva. Can one who does not follow the command of Śiva in practice presume to say anything of authority in the name of Śiva? Not to believe Śiva, not to believe in Śāstra, not to believe in Guru, not to believe in Śādhanā, and not to believe in the Devatā who is the object of Śādhanā, but to believe in Rāmaprasāda and his songs set to music! not to believe in Devatā, and yet to be mortally afraid of Her as if She were some wandering spirit; ¹ to cut the root, and then to pour water on it—such was not the art which Rāmaprasāda had learnt. It was because Rāmaprasāda served the Śāstra with bowed head and worked according to its dictates that the superworldly Śakti of Siddhi of which the Śāstra speaks attended him constantly.

In another song Rāmaprasāda says:

“O mind! you are still labouring under this error ²
You do not clearly realize what Kāli is.
Although you know, why do you, O mind! seem not to know
that the universe, consisting of three worlds, is the Mother’s
image?
And you want to worship Her by building images of clay!
The Mother who decks the three worlds with measureless gems
and gold.
Her you want to deck with worthless tinsel ornaments!—the
Mother who feeds the world with all kinds of food.
With what face do you think to feed Her on Ātapa rice ³ and
soaked peas?” ⁴

And so on.

Error is taking a thing to be that which it is not. False knowledge
or mistake is want of true knowledge. To mistake is to understand a
thing to be what it is not. Mistake is only another name for want of true
knowledge. Like darkness at sunrise, false knowledge flies of itself at the
dawning of true knowledge.

It is universally well known that a mistake lasts only so long as true
understanding is not had, and that when it appears there is an end of the
mistake; but he who says, “O mind, you are still labouring under this
error,” understands that it is an error of his mind. Why, then, does he
express the regret that he is still labouring under the error? An error ends
the instant we discover it. But here, although he says that his mind clearly
knows it to be an error, he yet, at the same time, regrets that the error still
exists. Let the critic now understand what sort of an error it is.⁵ Unlike

¹ Bhūta, ghost, etc.
² Bhrama.
³ Rice prepared from paddy without boiling the paddy.
⁴ Peas are thrown into water and soaked before being offered to the Devatā.
⁵ We may know it in a sense to be Māyā, but we cannot realize it so long as
we are Jīvas, to whom living in a dualistic world it is real.
you and me, Rāmaprasāda did not jeer at others for worshipping images. Before warning outsiders he warned the person within, and addressing his own mind said: "O mind! you are still labouring under this error." Had it been you or me, the utmost that we could perhaps have done would have been to say, "O Brother! You are still labouring under this error," meaning thereby that "I am free from it, so that I am a much greater man than you are." High-souled Digambara, on whom the merciful Devī showered her supreme mercy, touched the root of the matter when He calmly and solemnly said: "In delusion is my peace." But in the first stage of Sādhana, Rāmaprasāda, who could not then touch the root and master this weighty and solemn truth, said with an impatient and restless heart, "O mind! you are still labouring under this error." Rāmaprasāda is eager and restless to drive away the delusion which Digambara carefully cherishes in the inmost recess of his mind, and by doing so feels the bliss of the play of the Mother of the world. This restlessness on the part of Rāmaprasāda is merely the effect of the immaturity of his Sādhana. Because he was at one time thus restless, we must not think of him as being a worthless man; for, where there is possibility of rising, there is also the possibility of a fall, as the reverse also is the case. The very mention of Rāmaprasāda's name throws some people into a frenzy of sentiment. They think that he was a born Yogi who had attained Siddhi in a previous birth, and consider him to be all in all in the realm of Sādhakas; but we are not of this opinion. For we first hear what he has to say from his own mouth (in his songs), then ascertain its trustworthiness by comparison with the account of his Sādhana as known to the community of Sādhakas, and finally test it carefully on the touchstone of the Śastra. If even a much greater man than Rāmaprasāda says what is opposed to the Śastra, we at once discard it as if it were the words of a madman; for millions of Rāmaprasādas do not count for even so much as the most insignificant insects, if the command of the Śastra (by the grace of which Rāmaprasāda is an authority) is contravened. We shall show that the song above quoted was composed by Rāmaprasāda in a very immature state of Sādhana. We must first understand that at the time when Rāmaprasāda composed this song he had passed the first and entered the middle, and not the last, stage in the domain of knowledge, and had only just entered the higher domain of Sādhana. It was because he wanted to unite Sādhana with Jñāna (knowledge), only without reference to Bhakti (devotion), that he was led into inconsistency.

1 Himsel.
2 Tattva.
3 Author's parenthesis.
4 All seekers and worshippers are Sādhakas, but here reference is made to high Tāntrik Sādhana.
“Although knowing, why do you, O mind! seem not to know that the Universe, consisting of three worlds, is the Mother’s image?” The idea expressed in this passage belongs wholly to the realm of Jñāna (knowledge); but the verse, “You want to worship Her by moulding images of clay,” reveals a state of mental restlessness so far as Sādhana is concerned. If everything in the three worlds is the Mother’s image, then who can say that an image built of clay is not the Mother’s image? If from the point of view of Jñāna (knowledge) the Universe, consisting of three worlds, is considered the Mother’s image, then we must admit, with bowed heads, that an earthen image also is Her image. In short, we must not think that Rāmaprasāda, in contravention of the command of Sāstra, is asking people to abstain from moulding images of clay. As a matter of fact, he is simply voicing his sorrow that, “although the Mother is omnipresent in the three worlds, I have to-day to worship Her in single form in an earthen image, because I cannot see Her in Her Universe-pervading aspect.” And what Sādhaka does not sing the same song of sorrow until he attains the final stage of Sādhana preceding Siddhi? It is in order to remove this sorrow that it is necessary to worship Her, otherwise, why should one worship Her if from the very outset the sorrow ceases, and the Mother is realized as existing throughout the Universe? It is hardly necessary to point out what little spiritual competence such people possess as actually see earth instead of the world-pervading Mother, and yet, taking their cue from Rāmaprasāda, say: “O mind! you are still labouring under this error. You want to adorn with worthless tinsel ornaments the Mother who Herself deeks the world with countless gems and gold.” This, again, is an expression which merely indicates an unfulfilled aspiration in the realm of devotion. It is foolhardiness on your part to want to adorn with tinsel ornaments the Mother, the Rājarājēśvarī of the infinite Universe, who adorns the world with countless gold and jewels! From this it does not follow that the Mother cannot be adorned or that the Mother does not adorn Herself; on the contrary, it proves that the Mother can be very well adorned, if one has the power to adorn Her. She is the source of all beauty in the three worlds, so that it is the height of presumption to bring tinsel ornaments, worthless as grass, near Her fair body. It is difficult to restrain one’s laughter at even the thought of putting tinsel ornaments on the fair body of Her before whose feet the countless stores of jewels of even innumerable Kuberas disappear as does the light of a lamp before the sun. It is because of the pain of the thought of this irremediable deficiency that Rāmaprasāda has said: “Ah! that Mother you wish to adorn with worthless tinsel ornaments!” Why, despite of this, Sāstra has prescribed that

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3 Bhakti.

8 That is, if one is spiritually fit.

8 Kubera is God of wealth.
She shall be adorned, we shall show later. Here we say this much, that a person who proceeds to perform Sādhana is bound to satisfy his heart’s desire by adorning the Mother. It is the duty of all Sādhakas, male and female. When the heart is immersed in the depths of Sādhana, that which these depths are overpowers, according to a law of Nature, the Brahmatattva of the Mother of the world. To conquer that unconquered power of the Sādhana, even She Herself, who is unconquerable, often feigns Herself to be incompetent.

Sinking in the sweetness of the Creatrix’s play of love for Her devotees, Dāsarathi, great depicter of sentiment, has, in picturing the love of the Mother of the world, well displayed this in his poem entitled Āgāmani. When, for the sake of the Sādhana, which was the Durgāpūjā festival of the Prince of devotees, the Mountain-King, his Daughter appeared as the Destroyer of Mahiṣa, and stood in the courtyard in front of his Maṇḍapa on the evening of the sixth lunar day; when Menakā his Queen, whose life was in Umā, ran out with joy to welcome Her at the report of Her coming; and when startled and made afraid by the sight of Her martial appearance, the great Śādhiṅkā of the Daughter lost herself at view of this other form—then, on her, Mother Mahāmāyā, the daughter of old, cast Māyā and assumed a form of surpassing beauty.

SONG

"She appeared as Gaurī, the Two-armed daughter of Mountain,
Mother of Gaṅgā.
Daughter of the Mountain-King, with the graceful gait of an
elephant.
Spouse of Aśutoṣa, with two little children, held on Her two
hips.
Chāṇḍī appeared as though surrounded by moons."

1 Rasa.
2 When the Sādhaka becomes really full of devotion, then even the Devi seems to lose her non-dualistic Nirguṇa aspect, owing to the intensity of the Sādhaka’s devotion to the manifested aspect.
3 Bhāva.
4 On the coming—that is, invocation.
5 Temple.
6 Her daughter, the Devi.
7 Menakā, Her Mother.
8 Kanistattva.
9 Tattva.
10 The poem is speaking of Her as Pārvatī, or Umā. By “of old” reference is made to her previous manifestation as Sati, daughter of Dakṣa.
11 Himalaya.
12 Śiva, the “easily appealed.”
13 Children are so carried in the east.
14 That is, her children—namely, her two sons, Gaṅgā and Kārtikeya, and two daughters, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.
The beauty of the moon-faced Umā surpasses that of a million moons.
Ten moons shone on the nails of the Mother's feet.
Seeing this, the moon in the sky pales through shame.
Yet, can She be compared to the moon; She, at whose feet the moons roll?
In Autumn, in the Himālayas, it was like a fair of autumnal moons.
In receiving the moon-faced Umā, the Queen took, as it were, the moon in her hand.
Behind Umā's family of moons the moon in the sky was concealed.
With Her moonlike mouth the moon-faced Devī called out, 'Mother!'
The Queen replied: 'Is it you, O Durgā! the Dispeller of sorrows?
With weeping, O Tārā, Mother! I have lost the pupils (Tārā) of my eyes.
O Umā! to what a plight have I come since last I bid farewell to Thee!
O Mother! my body remains in the Himālayas and my life in Kailāsa.
In Thy absence I lie on the earth as one who is dead.
To-day Thou hast brought life to my body, and with it speech.
O Mother! how is it that Thou dost not remember that Thou hast a mother?
If Thy mother dies sorrowing for Thee, Thou wilt incur the sin of killing Thy mother.
Being sonless, what refuge have I but in my Daughter?
O Brahmamayi! all my hope is placed on Thee.
Old age comes upon me day by day, and at any moment I may die.
O Tārā! wilt thou not seek me when my strength is gone?
What Thou doest, O Saviour from existence! makes me afraid,
Lest, O Mother! when I send for Thee at the hour of death Thou shouldst refuse to come.'
At these words of the Queen, the Queen of Śiva said in sorrow:

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1 Her children.

2 What follows is a conversation between the Devī as Umā and her Mother Menakā. Her daughtership to Menakā was one of Her spiritual Avatāras.

3 The Mount and Paradise of Śiva.

4 Blessed, blessed are you, O Dāśarathī, devoted poet! Rightly did you arrange to bring Her to you in due time. It is concerning this that there is the saying, 'In men that is cleverness which secures both the worlds.' (Author's note).
‘When did you, O Mother! seek me? Whose father is a King and whose Mother is a Queen, what if Her husband has, perchance, become a Sannyāsī? The bitter words of women kill me with shame. We hear them say Thou art a King’s daughter, but has Thou no Mother? Father is of stone and so are you, O Mother! But I cannot conquer my love for you, and so I have come of My own accord.’

The Queen replied: ‘O Lady of Isāna! true it is that I am stone, and, O Mother! for Her whose daughter Thou art, it was best to be of stone.’

Saying this the Spouse of mountain greatly wept, and in plaintive words again addressed her Daughter:

‘As the motionless mountain is My husband, how can I get news of you? O gracious Devi! I pray Thee forgive my offence on that account. Many are the people, O Umā! who before me call Thee miserable, and as I hear them my mind burns with fire.

They say to me, O Queen! your Daughter, a tendril of gold, has become pale.

Destroyer of Tripura lives by begging.

Beloved Umā is my only treasure, the treasure of worship.

I want to keep my Son-in-law in my house, but Trilochana is not willing that I should do so.

Then archly and with pride Durgā said to Menakā, Who has told you of your Son-in-law’s distress? My Husband is the Creator and Destroyer, the Lord of the three worlds.

Rather is it you, O Mother! who are a poor man’s wife, but I am a Queen.

My Lord is the Lord of Kāśī, and no one can describe Him.

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1 Literally, “Māyā,” which here means attachment.

2 That is, Menakā.

3 Otherwise, how can She bear the pain of separation from Thee (Author’s note).

4 Himālaya, the husband of Menakā and father of Pārvati.

5 Śiva.

6 The three-eyed Deva, Śiva.

7 The glory of luminous Kāśī is much greater than that of all the riches of the infinite Universe. This is why Bhuvanesvara (Lord of the world), Paramesvara (Supreme Lord), and other epithets have been omitted, and the epithet Lord of Kāśī has been used to indicate the consort of Kāli. The purpose is more elaborately expressed in the line, “He is King of Kings at Kāśī, and your Daughter is Queen of Queens.” (Author’s note).
O Mother! in the world it is by My Husband's riches that people become rich.

Whoever with devotion begs of My Husband, to Him does—Trilochana \(^1\) give the wealth of liberation at a glance.

He is in want of nothing; but such is His nature that He yet behaves like some poor helpless man.

He who grasps the meaning \(^8\) of this is filled with feeling, \(^8\) and is saved from the cares of existence.

Will your riches make your Daughter and Son-in-law rich?

Do you want to give riches to Her who holds the Universe in Her womb?

Can He be poor in whose house your Daughter lives?

As Annapūrṇā I give food to the world,

And the Ocean, Kubera \(^2\) and others guard the wealth of Śiva.

How great, O Mother! must have been the religious merit \(^4\) you have earned

That you were able to give your Daughter to Him!

Such is the power of My Husband that I can make you Indrāpi, \(^5\)

I am such a Daughter of yours as is equal to ten sons.

It is out of jealousy that neighbours do not speak to you of happiness,

But wound you, O Mother! by speaking of sorrow.

The Queen said: 'O Brahmamayi! explain this to me.

If Thou hast so much wealth, where is the sign of it?

O Śāṅkari! \(^6\) does not Śiva's heart yearn to adorn Thee?

Why has not my Son-in-law given Thee jewelled ornaments?

Of what use is wealth if the body of Umā-moon is unadorned?

Poorly dressed and on foot Thou hast come. 'This is what makes me doubtful (of your wealth).'

Playfully and with smiles Umā replies to Menakā:

' O Mother! Trilochana \(^7\) cannot bear to see Me with ornaments,

For he says, What ornament is there in this world which can adorn Thee?'

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\(^1\) *Vida ante.*

\(^2\) *Bhāva; a play on the word Bhāva, which means both "meaning" and "feeling".*

\(^3\) *God of wealth.*

\(^4\) *Puṇya.*

\(^5\) *Consort of the King of the Devas Indra.*

\(^6\) *Feminine of Śāṅkara, a name of Śiva.*

\(^7\) *The "three-eyed," or Śiva, who in his forehead has the eye of wisdom (Jñānacakṣu).*
Tārīpi, 1 Thou art My crest-gem. Do gems become Thee?
Will the moon look bright if gems are placed on it?
My simple dress ever charms Āśutoṣa's 2 mind,
And what Pañcānana 3 desires that I do.
If this were not so, innumerable and priceless jewels would lie in
the dust before Me.'
The Queen said: 'Why should not ornaments become Thee?
Ivory, when set in gold, becomes more beautiful.
To-day I shall bring all kinds of jewels and see with my own eyes
Whether, O Īşāpi! they become Thee or not.'
Then in joy of love the Queen of Mountain brought jewelled
ornaments,
And put them with care on Umā-jewel.
Never, however, can ornaments look well on Umā's body;
She became like the moon in the grasp of Rāhu. 4
In grief the Queen became, as it were, dead, and stopped the
maids,
Saying: 'Do not bring worthless ornaments any more,
And quickly take off those which I have already put on Umā.
Let me see the unadorned body of the Mother.
They do not become Thee, O Mother Śaṅkari! Ornaments do
not become Thee!' 5
What Providence 6 is it which has made Thee, O Mother! Spouse
of Hara? 6
How beautiful Thou art, O Tārā! O Tārā, with face like the
autumnal moon,
I have, O Mother! given the moon the name of Tārā as I lost the
Tārā's (pupils) of my eyes. 7
This beauty charms Hara's mind, and destroys its darkness.
Is this the reason, O Mother Umā! why the Three-eyed Deva 8
does not allow Thee to be ever out of His sight? 9

So long as the desire to adorn Her is not done away with in this
manner, the effort 8 will not be successful; this is why Śāstra has made

1 Epithet of the Devi as Saviour. 6 Śiva, the 'easily contented.'
2 Śiva, the 'five-headed.' 4 That is, the eclipsed moon.
3 Vidhi. 5 Śiva.
6 A play on the word Tārā, which means the 'saviour' (a name of
the Devi), and also a 'star' and the 'pupil of the eye.' According to the Bengali
idiom, 'pupils of my eyes' means the 'light of my eyes.' The sense of the
verse is that when Urmā left Menakā the latter lost the sight of her eye, which is
Urmā Herself; and so by mistake gave her the name of Tāsā (in its sense of star),
although her proper name is 'Moon'.
8 Śiva, Her Spouse. 9 Sadhana.
provision for Her adornment. On that day on which She sees that I am tired out, discomfited, and put to shame in my efforts to adorn Her, the merciful Tripurasundari will, in order to end this trouble of Her son, adorn Herself with Her own beauty, and of Her own accord take Her seat on the throne of my heart. On the day on which when going to adorn the Mother with my ornaments, I shall myself be adorned with Her ornaments, on that day, my yearning to adorn Her will end for good and all. Then I shall throw up my arms in joy and call out to the world to see how, although all efforts to adorn the Mother fail, he who makes the efforts is himself adorned by virtue of the religious merit he thereby acquires. Rāmaprasāda has also told us what sort of an eye is required to be able to perceive the beauty and sweetness of that adornment. We shall try elsewhere to make this clear. Here we would say that, whether it suits the Mother or not, I shall adorn the Mother if my own condition requires it, for the Mother is as much my Mother as She is the Mother of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara. The Mother's mother, Menakā, proceeded to adorn the Mother because it suited her to do so, irrespective as to whether it suited Umā or not. But because Menakā thought the ornaments which were suitable for her to be also suitable for the Mother, the Mother refused to be adorned with her ornaments (vanity), and stood forth adorned with such ornaments only as properly belonged to the Mother. And then the divine beauty of Menakā sank in the sea of the indescribable beauty of Brahmamayi Umā. Then, throwing off the ornaments, consisting of the darkness of the vanity of individual existence, Menakā herself shone with the light of the Sun of the sole existence of the Mother of the world, and seeing at once the self-luminous true aspect of the Devi, which is consciousness, cried out: “Do not bring worthless ornaments any more, and take off quickly those which I have already put on Umā. Let me see the unadorned body of the Mother.” When, in order to satisfy the yearning and effort of Her Mother, the perfect grace of existence, consciousness, and bliss flowed in streams from the fair face to the fair feet of the Mother, all other adornments appeared as nothing before that supreme beauty. When thus her yearning was satisfied, Menakā eagerly said: “Let me see the Mother's unadorned body,” for the Daughter, although a Daughter in the aspect She had assumed for play, was then Perfect and Eternal Brahman in its aspect, as the Supreme Unity.

It was the upward flowing current of his spiritual feeling which painted Rāmaprasāda at the absence of materials suitable for the satisfaction

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1 Puṇya.
2 Daiva.
3 Śādhana.
4 Rūpa.
5 Ahaṅkāra. (Author’s parenthesis).
6 Ātha, dwindle into insignificance.
7 Sat, cit, and ānanda.
8 Tīrtha.
9 Kaivalya-rūpa.
of that yearning, and led him to say: "Ah! you want to adorn Her with worthless tinsel ornaments." This does not mean that "the Mother need not be adorned." The burden of the song of his sorrow was that he had not ornaments suitable for the adornment of the Mother. This must be so; for is there any such luckless son in the world as yearns to call the Mother Mother and yet has no desire to adorn Her?

"The Mother who feeds the world with all kinds of food.
With what face do you want to feed Her on Atapa rice and soaked peas?"

He who can adorn others can also be adorned himself. He who can feed others can also be fed himself. He who desires to adorn others may also desire to be adorned himself. He who desires to feed others may also have the wish to eat himself. Either say at once that the Devi neither adorns others nor is adorned Herself, neither feeds others nor eats Herself; or say that She both adorns others and is adorned Herself; both feeds others and Herself eats. Even if She is not, according to you, Herself adorned in Her aspect with form, yet in the formless aspect at least, as you understand and speak of it, She appears undoubtedly to adorn others. If so, how do you escape from the difficulty? All Sàstras and all people agree that the Formless aspect is eternally attributeless, and that it is impossible for that attributeless aspect to have the desire (which is itself an attribute) to adorn the world; but, then, such is the virtue of the nineteenth century that nowadays we frequently hear of a Formless Deity with attributes. We, however, understand this attribute to be an attribute of the worshippers of the Formless Deity instead of being really an attribute of the Formless Deity; for to admit the presence of an attribute in the Attributeless Brahman is tantamount to cutting flowers from a garden in the air. Those who speak of Brahman as perfectly devoid of attributes admit, in order to account for the universe which is made of attributes, the separate existence of Mâyā, composed of the three Gunas or attributes. Owing to their not being able to bear the weight of the deep and solemn mental effort which is necessary for the admission of the separate existence of Mâyā, they are placed in the following dilemmas: If, on the one hand, they do not admit the separate existence of Mâyā; on the other, they see that in the denial of all connection of the world with the Formless Brahman it is impossible to call Him "Merciful Father." If, on the one hand, It is addressed with attributes, shame will make it

1 See ante.

2 The idea of eating is in Her, otherwise She would not have fed the world; and when the idea is in Her, the idea of Herself eating must also be in Her. When She is saguna, she is so not only to the world, but to Herself also.

3 A mental segment for which the worshippers alone are responsible.
difficult for them to show their faces to worshippers of the Deity in His aspect with form, for in order to possess attributes it is necessary to possess form; consequently, they have denied perfect atumeness (that part of it which necessitates the possession of form) and present to view a queer sort of Brahman, half of which is with attributes and the other attributeless. Formless, yet with attributes; with attributes, yet formless. This Brahman of theirs is called "existence, consciousness, and bliss," after the Sāstra; "Merciful Father," after the Bible; "Creator" (Kartā) and "Lord" (Īśvara), after the Koran; and the "Formless One," through the malice which non-Āryas bear against Āryas; and He is also called "full of love" at times for the attainment of their selfish ends. Because they will not allow their Brahman to be identified with the Devatā whom Āryas worship, it has (despite its being, in fact, above name and form) name, though not form, otherwise how can it be constantly addressed with the exclamation "O!"? However that may be, even if this newly discovered Formless Brahman without attributes suits their purpose, we are ourselves in no wise bound to admit the existence of this novel appearance. We care very little for the Attributeless Brahman if He does not appear with form, and much less do we like this Formless One with attributes.

Who says that She who can feed others, as She can adorn others, cannot or will not Herself eat? If the will of Her who is will itself eternally exists, that will has as much relation to feeding as to eating. If you say that it is impossible for Her to eat, we shall say that it is also impossible for Her to feed. If you admit the possibility of feeding, why should you not admit the possibility of eating? You may say She feeds the world, but who will feed Her? For you may argue that it is impossible to give food to Her who gives food to the infinite universe. To those whom a knowledge of words has robbed of their sense and who cannot understand the truth, these words appear very sweet and as the final and essential truth; for their mind is naturally unwilling to disturb the state of self-intoxication which these delusive words produce in them.

"The Mother who feeds the world with all kinds of food,
With what face do you want to feed Her on Ātapa rice and soaked peas?"

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1 Author's parenthesis.
2 That is, the Hindu Sāstra.
3 The Hindu idea is that the Brahman has neither name nor form (Nirguna Brahman), or has both name and form (Saguna Brahman). These "reformers" put forward a Deity who has name, but no form, and is therefore neither Nirguna nor Saguna.
4 Nāma Rūpa.
5 Avatāra.
6 When the Śādhaka eats or thinks of eating, she it is who eats or thinks of it.
7 Tattva.
8 Sat, cit, and ãnanda.
Can anything be said after this? Here, once for all, is the most final decision which the matter admits of! For these people think (in consonance with their mental trend) that it is utterly false that She eats or will eat, the only essential truth being that She feeds!

If the Mother cannot be fed simply because She feeds the world, the reason for such inability is that if I want to feed Her She would demand repayment by me for all the food which She supplies to the world, for you ask yourself how much She who feeds the world can Herself eat. I say She may feed the world as much as She likes. What have I to do with that? I am bound to give Her only what She gives me to eat.

My gratification will be in giving to Her the enjoyment with which She has provided me and then retiring. I am not here to make payment of all Her dues. My responsibility is to pay Her only such dues as I owe Her. She is Brahman only so long as I am Jiva. She is Mother only so long as I am son. She is a Devatā only so long as I am a man, and my worship of Her lasts only so long as I am "I." My worship of Her will be at an end the very day on which my "I-ness" will be at an end, or my individuality will disappear the very day on which my worship of Her will come to a close. So long as I shall have to eat Ātapa rice and soaked peas, what justification have I for eating them without offering them to Her?

Although She is the Mother of the world, She is also my Mother. Although She is Bhagavān of the Universe, She is also my Lord. "The food which I shall eat, even that food I must offer to Pitrās and Devas." What I shall eat even that my Ištadevatā will partake of before me. Had She been capable of taking offence like you and I because the food consisted of Ātapa rice and soaked peas," would She have been worshipped by the three worlds as their Mother, merciful, kind to the poor, Protectress of the helpless, easily attainable by devotion and loving to devotees? Had not Śri Kṛṣṇa thrown away the food laid out by Rukmiṇī Herself (She who was full of supreme love and Mahālakṣmi), and hurried to Dvaitavana from Dvārakā in order to eat the remnant of herb in the cooking-pot left over after Draupadi’s meal (when that virtuous woman-friend of His, frightened at the prospect of being cursed by a Brāhmaṇa, sought

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1 Author’s parenthesis.
2 That is, She feeds the world; but you think that She has such a great body that She will not be satisfied with your small offerings.
3 Bhoga. There is a play on the word which also means the food offered to the Devatā.
4 Vide ante.
5 Prabhu.
6 His wife.
7 The forest where the Pāṇḍavas resided for some time during their exile.
8 Śri Kṛṣṇa's capital.
His protection), would He have been called throughout the three worlds by the glorious name of “Friend of Pāṇḍavas”? Had not Bhagavān, in spite of His being the Master of infinite universes and Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, assumed the form of young Gopāla on being moved thereto by the great devotion of Prahlāda, and taken with His own hand the plate of poisoned food from the hand of Prahlāda, who was grieved to give it to Him; and had He not put that food with the fingers of His own lotus-hand into His fair mouth, which is wont to drink nectar given by Brahmā and other Devas, would He have been known by the beloved title of “Hari of Prahlāda,” in spite of His being the Hari of the world? Had He not joyously taken in the hollow of His hand the grains of rice given by the wife (a devoted Sādhikā) of the poor and destitute Brāhmaṇa Sudāmā and tasted their sweetness, greater than the sweetness of nectar, singing the greatness of love, would anybody in this world have called Him Friend of the Poor and Merciful Bhagavān? Had not the Providence who dispenses the four-fold fruit to Jīva considered sweet the fruits half-eaten by herd-boys, would the sweetness of the name “The joy of Nanda” have been so much greater than that of “Saccidānanda”? Had not the Mother, the Genetrix of Brahmā and other Devas, left Her bejewelled throne in the luminously resplendent region of Kailāsa and gone to the thatched hut of Kālaketu, the hunter’s son, illuminating the house and the surrounding woods with the light of Her beauty; had She not proved the fitness of Her name “Caṇḍī” by giving the Caṇḍāla’s son a place on the fair lap which is ever sought by Guha and Gajānana; if Annapūrṇā, Charmer of the mind of Kāla, had not blessed Kālaketu by feeding him from the breast which even Brahmā and other Devas hardly gain, and eaten the food of a Caṇḍāla; had the dispeller of Kālaketu’s fear of death shrunken from becoming a hunter’s mother—would the distressed Jīvas of the world to-day have wept and cried, “Mother”? Had not the Mother, the Devatā whom Suratha and Samādhi sought in Sādhana gratified the two Sādhakas by

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1 The heaven of Viṣṇu (see ante).
2 Amṛta.
3 Feminine of Sādhaka worshipper.
4 Vidhātā.
5 Nandanandana.
6 Existence, consciousness, and bliss.
7 The mount which is Śiva’s abode.
8 An incident in Kavikāśika’s Caṇḍī.
9 The hunter.
10 Kārtikeya and Gaṇeṣa.
11 The Devī as Lady Bountiful and giver of food.
12 Śiva.
13 The King Suratha and the Vaishya Samādhi referred to in Caṇḍī (Mārkandeya Purāṇa). When wandering in poverty in the forest Rṣi Medhas spoke to them of the Devī whom they afterwards worshipped: Suratha in order to become a great King, and Samādhi that he might gain Mokṣa. The Devī granted both boons, Suratha is to be the Manu of the Savarnika (the next) Manvantara.
accepting, in the woods on the bank of a river, their worship with fruits and roots and offerings of blood issuing from their pierced hearts; would Sādhakas have staked their lives in their determination to perform Sādhana of the Mother? Both Śāstra and report say that Mahārājā Suratha and Samādhi the Vaiśya King, whose life was itself a great Samādhi, after establishing the Mother in an earthen image daily for three years, inflicted cuts upon their breasts with swords, and with the blood issuing therefrom made offering in the great worship, that by such intense devotion they might speedily get sight of Her.

This puts me in mind of something. The cutting of his own breast by a son in the worship of the Mother cannot be a favour of the Mother. And why being Mother should She be so cruel? In my opinion, however, Suratha and Samādhi did not cut themselves to their hearts in order that by satisfying Her with such a sacrifice the Mother might appear before them. They had heard from their Gurudeva, Mahārṣi Medhasa, that the Mother dwelt and played in the hearts of devotees. Hence they took the terrible determination "to see Her by bringing Her out from their hearts by importuning, if not by satisfying, Her." And with such intention they inflicted sword-cuts upon themselves. Otherwise, what was the necessity for so intense a form of devotion? People may call the blood which issued from their hearts their heart's blood, but I say that it was not merely the blood of the heart, but also attachment. And because this was so, blood flowed from the hearts of the Mother's devotees, brimming with love for the Mother. The moment such hearts were pierced, streams of love flowed copiously from them. But that love is transparent, fair, pure, unsoiled, thick, deep, and milk-white. How, then, did it become blood-red? How can I tell you? O devotee! you alone can say whence came that blood. To me it seems that the Mother who adorns the throne of the Isle of Gems in the Sea of Milk lay happily in that sea, which is the devotee’s heart, so that all blows which fell on it fell on the sacred feet of the Devi, who is so loving to Her devotees. Then, by the waves thus raised, the bright red paint on the lotus-feet of the Mother of the world, which Sadānanda had lovingly applied with his own hand, was washed off, and, mixing with the deep attachment of the devotee's heart, appeared as blood to the view of men. Otherwise, when the devotee had already

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1 They pierced their hearts, and blood flowed out, which was then offered to the Devi. The Sādhaka sometimes makes offering of his blood after making incisions in the body.

2 Ecstasy, communion with Brahman.

3 Tapasyā.

4 Tapasyā.

5 Mahādvipa.

6 Kütra.

7 Hindu women paint their feet with red lac.

8 Siva, the “ever joyful”.
offered his body, senses, heart, Ātmā, and all he possessed at Her feet, what was the necessity of re-offering that heart again and again to satisfy Her? The sea, despite its depth, is full of waves. Similarly, notwithstanding that love is ever deep, it is constantly restless. Such restlessness is its natural characteristic. To Him whom I love with all my heart, and to whose feet I have offered my all, to Him, nevertheless, I desire to offer it again and again, ten times every half an hour.

I know not whether it is a quality of love or of its object, whether of the devotee or of the beauteous feet of the Mother. But it is a fact, that as often as Suratha and Samādhī, urged by such restlessness, struck their hearts, so often did the Mother of the world move Her feet to let them know that She was awake, and gave clear evidence thereof in ripples of blood raised thereby. At last, fearing lest Mahēśvara should take it to heart were all the dye so lovingly and carefully applied by Him washed off (lest Śiva's words should prove false by the pain caused to the heart of the devoted Śādhakas were their constant offering of attachment to Her spurned and rejected), the Daughter of mountain left that comfortable couch and showed Herself to the Śādhaka by awaking, as one who is consciousness, in the earthen image, the beauty of which gave joy to their eyes. She showed Herself in a manner as if She knew nothing of all that had happened theretofore. Her heavy and indolent eyes, like those of the woman who has suddenly awakened from sleep, were stirred by a Mother's love, soothing the hearts of the devotees by shedding upon them the nectar of Her serene regard; and smiling softly with Her ruddy lips, She said to Suratha, "Mahārājā, take what you like," and to the Vaiśya also, "Gladdener of Kula (Kulanandana), take what you like." Ah, how sweet! The expression "Gladdener of Kula" in the mouth of the Mother was no mere word of address. It showed that the gate of Her unbounded love was open. The Mother charms with such sweet and soft address those who seek Her by becoming Hers only. Mahārājā Suratha was an interested Śādhaka. In spite of having been robbed and driven away by sons and relations, the bitter thirst of his mind for enjoyment of worldly things was not satisfied, so that he worshipped the Mother in order to

1 Author's parenthesis. The passage is obscure. It has been already said that the blood was not merely blood, but the attachment of the heart, the meaning of which appears to be that the shedding of the heart's blood was, as it were, the shedding of the heart's attachment. As this shedding is supposed to be caused by the Devī living in the heart, the Śādhaka might think it to be the rejection by Her of his offering of attachment. What the words of Śiva are cannot be made out from the context; unless it be the Tantra Śāstra in general.

2 See p. 112.

Sakāma; because he worshipped in order that he might gain the material benefit to himself of becoming a great King, whereas his companion was striving for the spiritual end of liberation.
regain his lost kingdom. This was why the Mother who dwells in all hearts addressed the Prince as Mahārajā. As for the Vaiśya, his keen dispassion, which had consumed his worldly desires to their very roots, was not to be satisfied so long as he did not obtain the Mother, the Mahāmāyā, who is the centre of all this Māyā. This was why the Mother very fondly and very affectionately used the title of "Gladhener of Kula," in addressing this son of Hers who had lost the Mother. Just as a worldly mother affectionately calls her son "support of his Kula (race), or ornament of his Kula (race)," if he be great and glorious; so the Mother, in spite of Her being above the world, was, as it were, over-powered by Her Maternal affection, and called the Vaiśya "Gladhener of Kula." O Mother, Thou hast none in Thy Kula (race), how, then, could he become gladhener of Kula to Theer? Perhaps it is because Thou hast appeared as Mother that Thy attachment to Kula has so greatly increased. That Thou hast none above Thee in Thy Kula (race) is no reason why Thou shouldst not have descendants. If really Thou hast no descendants in Thy Kula, then who are we? Whether Thou hast a Kula or not, Thou art the root of Kula, Kulaṇḍalini, Herself: The Kula path, O Mother! is for him who follows Thy path. My desires for Kula have been fully gratified. Now, O Mother! take me out of Kula into Thy arms, so that sitting at the root of Kula I may penetrate into its mysteries. Let the Kulakula sound of the river of existence cease for ever. O Mother! it was because Samādhi, Thy son immersed in Samādhi, gave lustre to this Kula by passing beyond the two Kulas of this river that Thou didst give him the endearing title of "Gladhener of Kula". Blessed were your devotees, Suratha and Samādhi! How shall we, Jivas of the Kali age, penetrate the deep mystery of the offering of sacrifice by you? By you alone was it offered, and by the Mother alone was its meaning understood. O Sādhaka of the embodied Deity! be you interested or disinterested in your Sādhana.

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4 Vairāgya.
5 Kulanandana. The word Nandana means also son. There is a play on the "Kula," which means "race family," as well as a form of Sādhana. It also means "shore" or "bank." See text, post.
6 No one is Her progenitor.
7 The name of the Devi whose abode is in the Mūlādhāra. There is a play on the word Kula.
8 The Tantra.
9 Here "family"—that is, the world.
10 Ecstasy; a play on the Vaiśya's name.
11 Human race.
12 Banks.
13 Sākāra.
14 That is, be the Sādhana done with the desire for personal benefit or not, as in the case of Suratha and Samādhi.
quire now of Suratha and Samādhi what has to be done in order to
directly perceive the appearance of the Mother in an outer image. The
worship in which men like Suratha and Samādhi wounded their breasts
with their own hands in order that they might see the Mother of the world
in an outer image—that worship is called idolatry to-day in the Kali age
by the community of infidels themselves, confused by the "learning and
science" of the nineteenth century. How absurd it is to say that
Mahārājādhirājendra Suratha, the paramount Monarch of this earth,
with its oceans, and high-souled Samādhi, whose heart was under the sway
of intense dispassion, and lighted by the fire of spiritual knowledge, rent
their hearts and made streams of blood flow therefrom in the course of a
play with a mere doll. Such criticism against the Savarnika Manu is
nothing but a clear sign of the influence of the Kali age. However that
may be, to Her who accepted even heart's blood as sacrifice from Suratha
and Samādhi in order to uphold the honour of the words of Śāstra told by
Herself, "Ātape rice and soaked pcas" cannot be unacceptable; and it is
because they are not unacceptable to Her that the Śādhaka has with
simplicity said:

"O Mother! in the Devaloka Devas worship Thee daily with nectar. O
Jagadīśvari! rulers of the earth worship Thee with delicious food. But, O Mother! Thou canst not for that reason reject my offering of leaves,
flowers, fruits, and water. O Mother! does fire refuse to accept blades of
grass because in the sacrificial pit fire is worshipped with firewood along
with ghee?" Fire is called the "all-eater," because by virtue of its power
of burning it is capable of appropriating to itself all things.

Fire accepts and consumes indiscriminately anything which is offered
to it. Similarly, the merciful Devi, who grants all desires, accepts, for the
gratification of Śādhakas, anything which is offered in the name of the
Almighty, Omniscient, and All-good. This acceptance is not to supply
any want on Her part, but in order that She who bears great love for Her
devotees may maintain them and their Vratas. Otherwise, in the dominion
of Her who is abundance itself and is plenty, the character of things and
power, there can be really no want. If there be any want it is only

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1 Pratyākṣakāranam.  
2 A compound of the words Mahārājā, Adhirājā and Indra. The word
Indra used as a common noun means "chief".  
3 Vairāgya.  
4 Tatvajñāna.  
5 Āmrtā.  
6 Vida ante.  
7 Mistress of the universe.  
8 Sarvabhuk.  
9 Vows, religious rites (see Introduction to Tantra Śāstra).  
10 Mahābhāva.  
11 Bhāva.  
12 Svabhāva.  
13 Prabhāva.  
14 Abhāva is non-existence. Mahābhāva and Bhāva are translated as plenty
because they have been made antitheses of Abhāva or want." As for Svabhāva
and Prabhāva, the author appears not to have been able to resist the temptation
of using these words for the sake of alliteration.
the want of want. Just as She has no want of "ätapa rice and soaked peas," so also She has no want to sweet-meats, sweet-rice, and nectar. What cause for sorrow or shame is there, then, in offering Her "ätapa rice and soaked peas?" To Her the store of nectar churned out of the seven seas is as much an atom as "ätapa rice and soaked peas" are atoms. She is as much unattached to ätapa rice and soaked peas as to nectar. Although She is really as free from attachment as the water on a lotus-leaf, when playing at the play of Samsāra, full of Māyā, She, in order to draw devotees to Herself, merely pretends to be delighted by the receipt of all these materials. Otherwise, what form of delight does the Devī, who is all delight and perfect delight, want that She should feel delight in receiving offerings of food.

It is ridiculous to think that offerings of food will give delight to the Ānandamayi, who is present in every atom of those offerings as consciousness. Her delight and joy of which the Śāstra speaks in dealing with the subject of worship are not Her delight and Her joy, but the play of the delight of Śādhanā and the joy of Śādhanā in the Śādhaka. We shall try to explain this point more clearly in its proper place. Here only we would observe that Rāmaprasāda sang the story of His heart with a mind full of sorrow, a sorrow which attacks every Śādhaka so long as the supreme truth does not dawn in the first stage of Śādhanā. His sorrowful song is not the expression of a decision arrived at in the domain of knowledge, but the indistinct expression of an ungratified longing in the domain of devotion. Through their senseless interference in matters in which they have no competence, the community of undevotees, who are ignorant of the truth, and without experience in these matters, put on the airs of wise men before the community of infidels by giving to words belonging to the sphere of devotion a queer appearance, coloured by the sphere of knowledge. But they failed to see that the sky was over-clouded, and a single shower was likely to wash off the light colour with which they had painted these pictures. It is highly amusing to see people taking the name Rāmaprasāda and making themselves known to others as his followers, yet all the time trying secretly to draw him to their own party. We are unable to understand how such people as hold so much intelligence in themselves

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1 Paramāṁna; rice cooked with milk and sugar.
2 Amṛta.
3 Paramāṇḍu. To Her who is Brahmā one is as insignificant as the other.
4 Naivedya.
5 Ciṣṭatta.
6 Adhikāra.
7 Bhakti.
8 Pāśupāṭa.
9 As opposed to fast colour.
10 Literally, "in their stomachs"—a Bengali idiom.
can have room to digest the food left by Rāmaprasāda. It is during life that evidence of men’s Sādhana is seen. But Rāmaprasāda gave evidence of his Sādhana in death as well as in life. By performing worship the night preceding his death, and placing the Mother’s image before him even at the time of death, the high-souled accomplished Sādhaka has given us full proof of his faith in Brahman with form, and of his performance of worship of the Deity with form. During life the Mother with form danced constantly in his songs and his heart. If after this a man can find it in himself to say that “Rāmaprasāda did not worship the Deity with form,” he may as well also say that Rāmaprasāda had no soul.

We shall quote here another of Rāmaprasāda’s songs of self-resignation. In this it will be seen how even his body and senses, not to speak of his mind, heart, and very self, were absorbed in the worship of the Mother.

“Of what use, O brother! is this body if it does not melt in love for Dakṣāṇā? ¹
Oh, fie, fie, to this tongue if it does not utter the name of Kāli.
Those eyes are sinful which see not the form of Kāli.
Oh, how wicked is the mind which does not sink under Her feet.
May thunder strike those ears which do not hear Her sweet name,
making copious tears flow from the eyes. For what purpose does their existence serve?
Oh, should we desire to have the hands which fill the belly, if they are not joined together to hold sandal paste, Jāvā flowers, and bael-leaves? ²
Oh, of what use are the feet, and wholly without purpose is the work they do by day and night, if they do not willingly and gladly carry us there where images of Kāli are enshrined?
If a man’s senses are not under his control, can Devatā be so?
Rāmaprasāda asks: ‘Does a Babul ¹⁰-tree ever bear mango fruits?’”

Let the Sādhaka here ask the critic what kind of Rāmaprasāda it was who wrote this song?

There are, again, many people who, on hearing all this infidel talk, think it to be a novel and refined form of criticism, which the brilliant genius of the nineteenth century alone with its constant pursuit of knowledge and science has originated. But we say that this iconoclasm is not a thing of to-day only when considered as a revolutionary principle in the sphere

¹ In those stomachs.
² Sākāra.
³ Sākāra Upāsanā.
⁴ Mūrtimātrī.
⁵ Ātmā.
⁶ Ātmatattva.
⁷ The gracious Devī.
⁸ Ātpa.
⁹ These are offered in the two joined palms to the Devī in worship.
¹⁰ A wild tree.
of worship. It has always existed since the creation of light and darkness, since the beginning of the eternal quarrel between the race of Devas and the race of Dāityas, and has lasted as long as nectar and poison have existed together in the depth of the sea; as long as there have been light and spots in the moon; as long as there have been heaven and hell, sin and virtue, Dharma and obstruction thereof, Deva and Dānava, man and Pišāca, knowledge and ignorance, faith and faithlessness, Sādhus and libertines, devotees and infidels. Even those who go to heaven fall into hell when their religious merit is spent. Even wise men are led astray when the attraction of sin becomes strong, and even Sādhus, banker to eat and drink things injurious to them when they become delirious in disease.

Similarly, non-Ārya proclivities, the unhappy result of evil deeds in previous births, move and possess the hearts of Jivas, in spite of their having been born in the Ārya race. This it is which gives rise to the kind of criticism under consideration. Eternally ignorant as we are of the root principle, we see only the fruit, and think that the branch alone is its cause; whilst as a matter of fact He it is who is at the root of all fruits—He whose command gives sour, bitter, pungent, and sweet tastes to the sap of trees from which fruits spring according to the seeds from which they grow. We therefore often find the hearts of even Cāndālas, who are devoted to Bhagavān, to be adorned with Sātvik qualities becoming Brāhmaṇas, whilst even Brāhmaṇas fall into a state worse than that of Cāndālas if they become estranged from Bhagavān. When, in spite of being the son of Brahmā Himself, and father-in-law of Bhagavān, who is perfect and eternal Brahmā, and husband of Bhagavati Prajāpati, Dakṣa did that which became an Asura, and lost all devotion to the feet of Bhagavān and Bhagavati, Paśupati, the Destroyer of the Pāśu bonds of the three worlds, attached to the headless trunk of His father-in-law the head of a goat, the worst of beasts. On the other hand, in the incident on which the Śivarātri

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1 Amṛta.  
2 Svarga and Narakā.  
3 Pāpa and Puṇya.  
4 Viṣṇu.  
5 Enemies of the divine principle.  
6 A low, unclean form of Spirit.  
7 Fious men.  
8 To work out the effect of sin. Ordinarily, hell is gone through first, then heaven, and then earth.  
9 Puṇya.  
10 Good qualities due to the predominance in them of the Sattvaguna.  
11 Śiva as Lord of creatures.  
12 Bonds which bind Jivas; as ropes bind pasus or beasts.  
13 This was after the sacrifice of Dakṣa, at which the latter had slighted Śiva. Hence Dakṣa is represented as a man with a goat’s head.
Vrata is based, we see the same Paśupati taking mercy on a Niṣāda. King, a killer of animals, delivering him from the terrible fear of death, taking him to the abode of Kailāsa, which great Yogis long to attain, and giving eternal peace to that Caṇḍāla, scorched as he was by the three fires, setting him in the cool shade of His feet. The Gitānjali therefore says:

**Song**

"Ah! the Dispenser of the fourfold fruit sits at the root of the bael-tree. Hence the Vyādha's hunting has brought the four-fold fruit to the hollow of his palm. Various kinds of fruits are borne by trees—so people do think. But it is not the trees, O brother! which really bear fruits. Fruits are borne by the energy of its root. O Vyādha! the tree which gave you shelter was no ordinary tree, but that which gratifies all desires. At the root of that tree was the Guru of the world, in consequence of Śādhana performed by you in previous births. Blessed was your initiation in hunting, blessed was the training you had received in archery. In consequence of which the Destroyer of Kāma accepted bael-leaves from you. Blessed is the śūtṛi of Śivarātri, in which the Mother, Protectrix of the world, took a Vyādha's son into Her arms instead of casting him away as a Caṇḍāla. If He who to-day, being born in a Brāhmaṇa family, omits to observe the Vrata, then whom would you call a Caṇḍāla? Above were you, O Vyādha Caṇḍāla! and under you was the Lord of the three worlds.

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1 On a stormy night a hunter with game on his back got up on a bael-tree at the foot of which Śiva and Pārvati came and sat. As the hunter mounted on the tree bael-leaves fell on Śiva. This satisfied Him, and He blessed the hunter.

2 King of Niṣādas, or Vyādhas, or Caṇḍālas, who live by hunting; regarded as a low and cruel caste.

3 The three sorrows—ādhyātmik, ādhibhautik, and ādhibhāvika—due to the self, the external material world, and the world of Devas.

4 The author's volume of verses.

5 See note, ante.

6 Kalpa-tree.

7 Śiva as destroyer of the Lord of Desire.

8 Lunar day.

9 One of the lowest castes.
How can I understand the meaning of this—born though I am in a Brähmana family?
In order to uphold the honour of a devotee, Bhagavân, who is in the power of devotees, took His own place below, and raised the devotee on high.
If the devotee falls, it will be difficult to save him.
This was why the Lover of devotees sat at the root of the tree, in order that he might hold the devotee in His arms.
O hunter! in order to bow to you to-day it is necessary to cross the Lord of the Universe.¹
I therefore bow to your feet, O Caṇḍāla! from a distance.
Bless me, O Niśāda-King! that I may to-day lose my Brähmana-hood.
And, making me your younger brother, give me, O brother! a place in Mother Caṇḍî's bosom.
You have, O brother! taken me up on the tree of Kula.² If I now fall, there will be an end of me.
In the name of Śiva, in the name of Śiva, I stretch out my hand.
Raise me to you.³

Because such fall is inevitable in human life, the Three-eyed Bhagavân, who peers through the three divisions of time,⁴ has, with a view to the cause of this fall, warned the world of Sādhakas beforehand, and Himself said in the Yogini Tantra: ⁵

"Many celestial and terrestrial obstacles appear in pilgrimage, construction of palaces, and specially at the beginning of any religious act, Vrata, or Yajña.⁶ The Devatās who bring about or preside over these obstacles should be worshipped at the very outset with sweetmeats and sacrifice, otherwise irremediable obstacles will surely appear. Besides these outer obstacles, there are other obstacles which reside in the body of the operator or Sādhaka himself. These inner obstacles possess the minds of Jīvas, and are manifested as sins knowingly committed. My Beloved! hear an account of these obstacles. O Devī! some of these mental obstacles appear as restrainers,⁷ and others as instigators.⁸" (As a matter of fact, by fighting with each other, both these restraining and instigating obstacles seem only to waste the Sādhaka's lifetime, so that instigating obstacles also

¹ Viśva-नātha, "Cross," because the Lord of the Universe is between the hymnist and the Vyādha, for Śiva was at the foot of the tree.
² That is, Kula-sādhana.
³ Past, present, and future.
⁴ Second Part, Eighth Patala. ⁵ Daiva.
⁶ Vow and sacrificial rite (see Introduction to Tantra Śāstara).
⁷ Nivarttaka. ⁸ Pravarttaka.
should be considered as restraining obstacles in a different form; otherwise, an inclination which instigates work would never have been called an obstacle by the Śāstra. Such instigating inclinations are merely ropes from which swing cradles of doubt. Description of obstacles follows: “Thought of sinful objects, whether they are near or very far off, be the distance a thousand or hundred thousand of yojanas; detriment to religious work through laziness, grief, delusion, old age, and disease, which destroys youth and wealth (4, 5); quarrel with wife; famine; home difficulties (quarrels with relations, quarrels with members of family, and so forth); anxiety on account of many Vratas (undertaking many Vratas at one and the same time, and then being anxious for fear of occurrence of omissions in their performance); “the vanity that ‘I am a righteous man’ (6); sudden subjection to grief, in spite of the absence of the occurrence of any sin during the performance of a religious rite; the occurrence at the sight of Devatā Himself and His manifestations of such perverse ideas as that Tulasi leaves are mere leaves of a tree; myrobalan is mere fruits of trees; Sālagrama is a mere stone; images of Devatā are mere pieces of wood, and a Brāhmaṇa is merely an ordinary man; Swayambhu Śiva is merely a round stone; conch is merely a kind of shell, and the horn of rhinoceros is merely flesh in a transformed state. These and such other notions as that Tirthas are merely water, Gangā is a mere river, and holy places are mere pieces of land, repeatedly appear in the mind of Jīvas as obstacles in the form of scepticism, and obstruct the performance of a religious rite (7-10). It is only when the mind is drawn by the upward attraction of Dharma by virtue of merit, acquired in previous births, strengthened by firm faith, and thoroughly purified by instructions from Guru, that it is rendered capable of crossing this sea of obstacles. Again, a wicked mind is the cause of the appearance of these obstacles. In fact, the mind alone causes man’s bondage, as well as liberation (11).” (Knowing the truth about these obstacles, a Sādhaka should at the very

1 Vṛtti.

2 Eight or nine miles.

3 Religious rites (see Introduction to Tantra Śāstra).

4 Pātaka, which most probably here means sin caused by any omission or irregularity.

5 Vibhūtis.

6 Used in worship of Viṣṇu. The Tulsi plant was originally a Gopi, beloved of Kṛṣṇa, cursed by Rādhā. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa.

7 Given at samkalpa rite.

8 Stones of peculiar structure found in the Gandakī River, worshipped as Nārāyaṇa.

9 Anādi, or self-sprung Liṅgas.

10 Used in Eastern Bengal in Tarpaṇa as arghyapātra (offering vessel).

11 Here sacred rivers.

12 Pushya.
commencement of a religious work resolve to control his mind, and should seek refuge at the lotus-feet of Mahāśakti, invoking Her that he may gain power and strength for himself.)

Now, Śādhakas will see that the prediction of Bhagavān in the Śāstra is a subtle criticism of the present time. But seeing we see not, and knowing we know not, that there already visibly exists a visible root infinitely more subtle than all these subtle fruits. Hence all that we can do is to weep plaintively and pray: "Victory to Thee, O Three-eyed Mother! Take me out of this deep, dark well of one-eyed criticism, and, O Mother! give light to the eyes of Thy children of darkened vision by painting with the eye-paint of Thy beauty,¹ which is existence, consciousness, and bliss,² an Añjana better than crushed Añjana; so that, looking at that fair countenance of Thine, soft with kindness, which, though black, is cool with the coolness of a crore ³ of moons, and is bright as though it were a sun, we may, O Mother! resign ourselves as the Mother’s children to the Mother’s arms.”

¹ The black appearance of the Devī is here called an Añjana (black collyrium), with which the eyes are painted.
² Sat, Cit and Ánanda.
³ Ten millions.