

An Imaginary Interview with Ramakrishna

Swami Chetanananda

Reporter: Sir, you are a world famous spiritual personality. On the occasion of your 175th birth anniversary, we would like to publish an interview with you in our magazine. I shall ask you a few questions and our readers will be delighted to hear direct from you. Please introduce yourself.

Ramakrishna: My name is Gadadhar Chattopadhyay; my village friends would call me Gadai, but Calcutta people know me as Ramakrishna Paramahansa. My father's name was Kshudiram Chattopadhyay and my mother, Chandramani Devi. I was born in 1836 at Kamarpukur village and lived there for 16 years. In 1852 my elder brother Ramkumar took me to Calcutta for further education and also to help him perform priestly rituals in some people's homes. I used to live with him in a small room in a slum on Bechu Chatterjee Street. From 1855 to 1885, I lived at Dakshineswar as a priest of Rani Rasmani's Kali temple, but I performed the ritual only a few years. The last year of my life I lived in Shyampukur and Cossipore.

Reporter: We know that you were a great sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) and you had the vision of Kali. We will be very happy if you can tell us the story of your sadhana and what kind of obstacles you faced.

Ramakrishna: Look, Sharat [Swami Saradananda] wrote about my sadhana in detail in the *Lilaprasanga* [*Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play -- Part 2*], and also I spoke about spiritual disciplines at different times to the devotees, and this was all recorded by Mohindar Master [M.] in the *Kathamrita* [*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*], so I don't like to repeat those things. You ask your readers to read those books. However, I will narrate briefly the kind of obstacles I had to face. You see, after my vision of the Divine Mother, people of the Kali temple thought that I had gone mad. Mathur engaged a few ayurvedic doctors who prescribed "Madhyam Narayan oil" and "Vishnu oil." (They are different kinds of medicinal oil that have a very cooling effect on the body.) These oils are used by mad people. I put several gallons of those oils on my head and my navel.

But you know, I slapped Rani Rasmani (Mathur's mother-in-law) in the Kali temple because she was thinking of a lawsuit there. On that very day, Mathur thought that I was really crazy, and the cause of my craziness was my unbroken chastity. To break my chastity Mathur hired a prostitute. When I was performing the *arati* (vesper service) in the Kali temple, that prostitute entered my room and sat on my bed waiting for me. There is an oil-lamp flickering in the corner of my room. When I came into my room, I saw a beautiful girl with 'dagar-dagar chokh' [large fascinating eyes]. Seeing that beautiful girl I ran out and called Haladhari and Hriday. They and some temple workers came to my room. Seeing a big crowd, that young girl hung her head in shame and left the room.

To tell you the truth I passed through various ordeals during the time of my sadhana. I suffered from a burning sensation in my body and also from blood dysentery. I was completely oblivious about food and sleep. Snakes would crawl over my knees and birds would sit on my head. Moreover, the temple officials ill-treated me. Let me be frank with you, during that time, only one person stood

behind me and saved the situation. That was a woman, 'Bhairavi Brahmani.' She was a great yogi and was expert in Tantra scriptures. She saw all the signs of an avatar (divine incarnation) in me. She challenged Mathur and asked him to bring all the scholars to the temple, and she would prove to them that these signs in me were the signs of 'Maha Bhava.' Chaitanya had those signs.

Mathur was tired of spending money for my treatment. I had no health insurance. Anyhow, he invited Vaishnavcharan and Gauri Pandit and other scholars to Dakshineswar and in that gathering Bhairavi proved that my divine ecstasy was not madness by quoting the scriptures. The scholars also agreed, and that convinced Mathur. This was a great relief for me. Afterwards the Divine Mother showed the forms of Kali and Shiva in my body to Mathur, and from that time on Mathur served me with great devotion for fourteen years.

Reporter: Your father died when you were very young. Did your mother and brothers help you in your spiritual life?


Ramakrishna: No, they did not help me much in spiritual life. My eldest brother was 31 years older than me, and the second brother was 10 years older. They loved me and tried to educate me, but I was not interested in a bread-earning education. Then, when I came back for a visit to Kamarpukur, my mother thought that I was possessed by a spirit, so she engaged an exorcist to get rid of it. They could not understand my divine madness. When nothing worked, my mother and second brother thought that if they put the responsibility for a girl on my shoulder, then that girl would straighten me out. They began to search for a bride for me. Finally, I told them to go to the house of Ram Mukhopadhyay in Jayrambati, as his daughter was earmarked for me. There

they located Sarada, a five years old girl. The marriage was arranged, and my brother took a loan of 300 rupees to pay the dowry and I got married.*

Reporter: I know you are a Paramahansa sannyasi and you have given up 'woman and gold'. Still we are eager to know a little more about your married life.

Ramakrishna: I understand you are curious to know about my married life. Sharat has written elaborately about why I got married in the *Lilaprasanga* (Part 3, Chapter 4). Ask your readers to read about it there. Listen, Ram, Krishna, Buddha, and Chaitanya were avatars and they were all married. The first three of them had children and the last two left their wives. I married to demonstrate how one can transcend the physical relationship while being a married man. Without marrying, if I had given advice about renunciation, people would comment: "Well, he is a monk, so he is talking about renunciation. He has no knowledge of family life." Five years after my marriage, I took monastic vows from Totapuri. Then I attained nirvikalpa samadhi and became absorbed in sadhana.

To tell you the truth, my luck was very good — I had a wonderful wife. Have you noticed that some men's mouths water when they praise their wives? They are so enamoured of their wives! You see, I don't belong to that group. When I married, Sarada was five years old. She was a village girl, very straight-forward, very simple, shy, hardworking, gentle, and extremely intelligent. I am glad that I

* In those days the dowry for a grown-up girl was high. Ramakrishna's family could not afford it, so they got a little girl for less money. 

did not marry a sophisticated city girl, who demands jewelry, fancy clothes, cosmetics, a big house, a car, and all sorts of gadgets and furniture. They nag day and night for those things. Sarada never demanded anything from me. Not only that, when she grew up, she never wrote me a letter.

You are a modern reporter. You do not know how in the old days a wife would write letters to her husband. I am just giving you an example how a bride would address her husband:

Sri charan prayasi -- I am ever devoted to your feet;

Sara divanishi -- whole day and night;

Darshana piyasi -- I am hankering to see you;

Dasi -- I am your maid servant.

But those days are gone. Nowadays the husband and wife exchange their love and emotion through mobile phone, email, and Skype. And they address each other: "Honey," "Yes, my dear," "I love you," "I miss you," and so on. Nowadays they call each other by name. My wife was nineteen years younger than me, but I respected her so much that I never called her by her name. I used to address her, saying: "Hello," "Hi," "O Ramlal's aunt."

Observing that I had become a sannyasin, my mother-in-law used to lament that her daughter would not have any children. You see, the nature of old ladies all over the world is the same. They hanker for grandchildren. One day I told my mother-in-law: "Listen, mother, please do not worry. Your daughter will have so many children that her ears will burn from constantly being called 'Ma, Ma, Ma – Mother, Mother, Mother.'"

Reporter: The Brahmos say that you ill-treated your wife, because you did not have any physical relationship with her.

Ramakrishna: It is not true. I never ill-treated my wife. Don't listen to those Brahmos; they are *bhogis*; they only understand sensual enjoyment. Their minds dwell below the level of the navel. I loved my wife very dearly. I never quarreled with her, and never hurt her even by throwing a flower. I always addressed her with respect, saying, "tumi" and not "tui".[†] One evening at Dakshineswar I was in an ecstatic mood and hearing a noise I thought it was my niece Lakshmi, so I said, "Shut the door as you go out," addressing her familiarly as *tui*. When I heard "All right," I realized it was Sarada. I was startled and cried: "Oh, it is you! I thought it was Lakshmi. Please forgive me for addressing you as *tui*." Look, we were married 27 years and not a single day did we have any misunderstanding or fight. Could you show me another example like that of a married couple nowadays? I trained my wife in various ways and gave her so many spiritual instructions. I even arranged a teacher who taught her how to read primary books in Bengali. She could write and read the Ramayana and Mahabharata in Bengali. In the beginning she did not know how to cook properly, and then my sister-in-law Shakambhari taught her. She never met my eldest sister-in-law Sarvajaya, who died in 1849 while giving birth to Akshay. Sarada served me and my old mother with love and great care. I installed a pitcher of bliss in her heart.

[†] In the Bengali language there are three forms of the second person pronoun. When addressing a revered elder, *apani* is used. To a person of equal rank and age, one says *tumi*. But the familiar form, *tui*, is used only when speaking to juniors or servants. Thus it would have been considered disrespectful had the Master knowingly addressed Holy Mother in this manner.

Reporter: According to the Hindu tradition, a wife considers her husband to be a god and worships his feet. In your case, you did the reverse. You put vermilion on your wife's forehead, applied *alta* (red paint) around her feet, worshipped her with flowers and sandal paste, and bowed down to her, touching her feet. Is this right?

Ramakrishna: You modern people won't understand the mystery of my worship of her as the goddess Shodashi. Let me tell you frankly, you people consider women as 'second class' citizens. How much they are humiliated, persecuted, and abused! By worshipping Sarada as the goddess Shodashi, I gave the supreme honour and dignity to womankind. I awakened the Motherhood of God in her and offered the results of all my sadhanas so that she could carry my message and demonstrate the Motherhood of God to the world.

Reporter: One hundred and seventy-years have passed since your birth. Do you see any change around you?

Ramakrishna: Look, this world of maya is ever changing. Only God never changes. Look at Kamarpukur, my birth place. Now it has changed so much that I cannot recognize it without a guide. Kamarpukur used to be called the "Queen of villages". Now it has become the "Emperor of cities". In fact, it has become a city with electric lights, a cinema house, TV in most houses, restaurants, hotels, studios, shops, a school and college, paved roads, cars, buses, and so on. The Ramakrishna Mission has kept only our 3 thatched huts and the mango tree that I planted, and has changed everything else. The Mission has established a stone temple on my birthplace, and Raghuvir's thatched hut has been replaced by a brick structure. The Shiva temple of the Pyne family is gone, but the tin roof of

the Laha's school is still standing on some posts. A couple of "Jilipi" (Indian sweet) shops are still there.

You are talking about change? I remember when I first went to Calcutta with my brother via the Telo-Bhelo meadow. We had to cross 4 big rivers -- the Dwarakeswar, Mundeswari, Damodar, and Ganges. But now bridges have been constructed on all those rivers. Previously it would take three days to reach Calcutta from Kamarpukur, and now you can reach there in two to three hours. You can have your breakfast in Calcutta, lunch in Kamarpukur, and again dinner in Calcutta. There are wonderful guest-houses with running water, electricity, and other modern facilities.

Reporter, look at the irony of nature! The landlord of Dere village evicted my honest father from our parental home because he had refused to give false witness in favour of the landlord. Now that palatial building of the landlord has been reduced to ruins. And the villagers of Dere have built a temple with a marble statue of me on our old family property. Just see, truth always triumphs.

Reporter: You were present during the dedication ceremony of Dakshineswar temple in 1855. What changes do you see there?

Ramakrishna: Mother Kali's image in the temple is unchanged, and so is the temple complex. You will have to understand that those buildings are over 150 years old and so they have deteriorated to a great extent. But somehow the descendents of Rasmani are continuing to repair and repaint those buildings. The floor of my room was of red cement; now it has been changed to mosaic. They have kept my cots as they were and put lots of pictures in my room. You see, I collected some pictures and images -- Kali, Krishna, Rama, Chaitanya and

his kirtan party, Dhruva, Prahlada, Christ extending his hand to Peter, plus a marble image of Buddha, and also an image of Ramlala. They created a spiritual atmosphere in my room. But I am sorry to tell you that some have been stolen, specially my beloved Ramlala.

During Rasmani's time I repaired the foot of the broken image of Krishna and installed it on the altar. In 1930 her descendants replaced the old Krishna image with a new one. And the image of Krishna that I repaired has been on an altar in the north room of the Krishna temple. Music is no longer played from the nahabat (the music tower). I saw Sarada's marble statue has been installed in the northern nahabat. During the centenary of the Dakshineswar temple in 1955, Rani Rasmani's temple was dedicated between my room and the nahabat. My beloved banyan tree in the Panchavati and also the bel tree are dead. They were witnesses of my sadhana. My sadhan kutir, where I practised Advaita sadhana, was a thatched hut and now it is a brick building. No one can stop the flow of time. The village of Dakshineswar is now part of the city of Calcutta. Two bridges have been constructed over the Ganges near the south side of Dakshineswar temple. A meditation cottage has been built near the pine grove in the north. If you really want to know more about Dakshineswar during my time, then read Mohindar Master's description of the temple garden of Dakshineswar in the *Kathamrita* [see the appendix of *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*].

Reporter: Sir, Dakshineswar is really a marvelous place and you lived there for 30 years. Now it is a historical as well as holy place, and every day many people visit your playground.

Ramakrishna: I really loved Dakshineswar; it was my sadhan-place and the place of my divine play. Once I wanted to leave Dakshineswar, but Mathur did not let me. I told him that I would stay as long as he was alive. But he said to me: "Father, my wife, Jagadamba, loves you, so please stay." I said: "All right, as long as she lives, I will stay." Again he said, "Father, my son Dwarik is very fond of you." "All right, as long he lives, I will stay," I said. Mathur knew who I was, so he did not want me to leave Dakshineswar. However, Dwarik died in 1878 and Jagadamba died in 1880. I left Dakshineswar in 1885 and went to Calcutta for my cancer treatment. I lived in Shyampukur for 70 days. I could not stay there longer because I could bear the pollution from the coal smoke from the kitchens of the neighbourhood. I wanted to return to Dakshineswar, but Mathur's son Trailokya did not allow me to come back. But as it was hard for me to breathe in Calcutta, the devotees rented a nice garden house in Cossipore, where I stayed till the end of my life.

Reporter: Sir, please tell us about your great disciples.

Ramakrishna: Those stories are all published in many books. Ask your readers to read them. However, I will tell you a few things: My main disciple, Narendra [Swami Vivekananda], used to think that I was an unlettered person. I told him categorically that I knew the alphabet. Perhaps you have seen my signature "Sri Gadadhar Chattopadhyay" in some printed books. Moreover, I copied some books, such as the story of Harishchandra, the story of Mahiravan, the story of Subahu, and the story of Yogodya, which you may find now in the Belur Math museum. The Divine Mother has taught me the essence of all the scriptures.

Narendra was proud of his learning and intellect. He used to tell me: "Sir, you are illiterate. What can you teach me?" I told him: "Very good, I will not have to talk then. You just come here and enjoy this beautiful temple garden." Afterwards observing my samadhi and the depth of my spiritual experiences, he was puzzled. And finally one day he said to me, "Sir, could you give me some medicine so that I can forget what I have learned?"

Really I had some wonderful disciples. I trained them and transmitted my spirituality to them so that they could carry my message. Now people are dumbfounded observing their divine life. They are now in the pages of history along with me.

Reporter: You are talking about your monastic disciples, but your householder disciples, such as M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta), Girish Chandra Ghosh, Ram Chandra Datta, and others also preached your message.

Ramakrishna: Of course they did. Their contributions are not insignificant. You see, Mohindar Master was a wonderful devotee, but a shy and tongue-tied person. He was a school teacher and used to record my conversations in his diary secretly. Later he developed his diary and published the *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* [*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*], and thus my message spread all over the world. Now you can even find it as an e-book. Girish was a drunkard and debauchee, but his life was totally changed when he gave me the power of attorney. He incorporated my teachings in his dramas and spread my message in the red light districts of Calcutta. Ram gave lectures on me in the Star and Minerva theaters in Calcutta and spread my message. Surendra, Balaram, Durgacharan, Kalipada,

and others were also wonderful devotees. My women devotees -- Jogin, Gauri, Golap, Aghoremani, and Nistarini -- were also outstanding.

Reporter: Sir, nowadays some intellectuals are writing books based on your philosophy. There is no dearth of philosophers in India who have been debating and arguing about philosophical ideas over the centuries. Some think that you are a 'dualist,' some say, 'qualified nondualist,' and some believe that you are a 'nondualist.' There is so much confusion about your philosophy. Our readers will be benefitted if you throw some light on this issue.

Ramakrishna: I see that you have raised a very sensitive issue. Look, I practised sadhanas of various sects of Hinduism, and then I practised Christianity and Islam, and I realized God in all those paths. Finally, I declared: "As many faiths, so many paths." I tell people not to fight or quarrel about religion. If you sincerely follow your path and love God, you will attain Him. This is the view of the Gita also.

You see, I enjoy various kinds of dishes -- soups, pickles, hot curry, and fried stuff. I love to play a flute with seven holes, as this creates various ragas and raginis (melodies). I do not like the bag-pipe's monotone "poooooo" like the Brahmos, who think of God in only one way. Sometimes I say, "Ma, Ma, Kali, Kali"; sometimes, "Krishna-Krishna, Ram-Ram, Shiva-Shiva, Jesus-Jesus, Allah-Allah, Gaur-Gaur." I don't care for dogmatic views about God or monotonous ideas. All gods and goddesses of all religions are my relatives, so I have a large spiritual family. I can joyfully communicate with the people of all religions. I told my disciples to follow: "As long as I live, so long do I learn." I am the meeting point of all faiths, all paths, all yogas, all philosophies, and all doctrines. If

someone tries to establish a single school based on my religious thought, that person will be an object of ridicule.

There is a controversy about God -- whether He is formless or with form. I explained this mystery to Mohindar and others by citing the example of water and ice, which are non-different. God is with form and again formless. Through the cooling influence of bhakti one sees the forms of God in the Ocean of the Absolute. But when the Sun of Knowledge rises, the ice melts, and it becomes the same water it was before. I told this to the Brahmos many times because they only believed that God is formless.

You see, reporter, my disciple Narendra joined the Brahmo Samaj and did not believe in Mother Kali. Not only that, he used to criticize my Divine Mother. He used to consider my vision of Kali to be a hallucination. One day I angrily told him: "You criticize and ridicule my Mother. Don't come here anymore." He smiled and prepared my smoke. He had deep love for me. Then his father passed away and he was in a dire state of poverty. He could not get a job. One day he came to me and said: "Sir, I can't bear the starvation of my mother, sisters, and brothers. I know Mother Kali answers your prayer. Why don't you pray for me?" I told him: "You don't believe in my Mother and that is why you have all this trouble." "I don't know your Mother, sir," he said. Seeing his pitiable condition, I said: "All right, today is an auspicious day. In the evening go to the Kali temple and She will give you whatever you will ask for." He went to the temple and prayed: "Mother, give me knowledge, devotion, discrimination, renunciation, and uninterrupted vision." He prayed for only those five things and could not ask for money. I sent him to the temple three times but he could not ask for money. You see, he is a great soul. He was not born to lead a worldly life like others. Finally, when he fell at my feet and requested me to do something for his

family, I told him, "Your family will not suffer from plain food and plain clothing." I also taught him a song to Kali, "Ma Tvam hi Tara' and he sang that song the whole night and finally fell asleep on my floor.

I knew Narendra would carry my message of universal religion to the world. My view is: God is both with form and without form. I don't care for narrow, bigoted, and one-sided views about God. Blind people touch different parts of an elephant and express their respective views. In the same way different sects of religion grow, and argue over their views because they have not seen the whole elephant. I showed Narendra the whole elephant so that he would not be able to form any narrow sect. I emphatically told him, "Do not limit God. He is infinite." He then proclaimed this universal religion all over and soon all religions of the world will be harmonized under that one religion. You see, religions are paths, and not God.

I remember you were saying something about my philosophy, or *phalajophy*. Look, I have not studied the scriptures, but I heard many of them. Later I made a garland of those scriptures, put it around my neck, and danced. My Divine Mother made me realize the wisdom of those scriptures. My disciple Harinath [Swami Turiyananda] was well versed in the scriptures and he wrote a letter about my philosophy on 18 April 1919 to Swami Sharvananda. Ask your readers to read it [see *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*]. He raised a host of different views of various schools of philosophy, such as Gaudapada's doctrine of no creation, Shankara's doctrine of superimposition, Ramanuja's doctrine of transformation, and Sri Kantha's doctrine of Shivadvaita. These philosophers expressed their views according to their understanding. Finally, Harinath wrote: "Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy is: In whatever way, and at any cost, we must attain God. The Master said, 'Tie nondual knowledge in the corner of your cloth and

then do as you please.' Once you attain God, it does not matter which doctrine your temperament bids you to uphold." However, I just quoted here a little from that letter to satisfy your curiosity. I don't like to prattle about this *phalajophy* [philosophy].

I forgot to tell you one thing: One day Keshab Sen requested me to speak on *nirakara* [the formless God]. I uttered three times "nirakara, nirakara, nirakara," and went into samadhi. I tried to make him understand that *nirakara* is beyond the mind and speech. One cannot give a lecture on that subject. I am a dualist, a qualified nondualist, a nondualist, and again beyond all those doctrines. God is unique -- devoid of duality and nonduality. The rascal who tries to bind me to any particular doctrine is a fool.

Reporter: Sir, although the Brahmos did not believe in the gods and goddesses of the Hindus, it was Keshab who first preached you and made you known to the society. Moreover, most of your disciples were connected with the Brahma Samaj.

Ramakrishna: You are right. Keshab recognized my divinity and wrote about my life and teachings in his various papers and journals. I first thought that Vaishnavcharan would spread my message, as he was a sadhaka and pandit. But Keshab was so impressed, observing my samadhi and listening to my teachings, that he would often come to me with his group. I also visited them in Keshab's house and at their temples. There was a commotion in Calcutta when the Brahmos wrote about me in the *Indian Mirror*, *Sulabh Samachar*, and *New Dispensation*. You can ask your readers to read those stories in *Samasamayik Drishtite Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa*.

Narendra, Rakhal, Sashi, Sharat, Yogin, Ram, Manomohan, Girish, and others came to know about me by reading those journals of the Brahma Samaj. Keshab also introduced many of my ideas in his New Dispensation, such as the Motherhood of God, devotional singing, and so on. Later, one day Keshab took me to his meditation room and worshipped my feet with flowers and sandal paste.

I was very fond of Shivanath [a Brahma leader], but later he cut off connection with me because he noticed that I would mix with drunkards and fallen people and give them spiritual instructions. Look, reporter, Narada and Shukadeva will not come to me for spiritual instructions because they are ever-free. There is no glory in making a good man good; but it is something if one can transform the life of a drunkard or a fallen person. He is truly a real sadhu -- a redeemer of the fallen and a changer of people's destiny -- who can transform others' lives.

Reporter: Sir, perhaps you are aware that in 1982 when the copyright of M.'s *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* expired, there was an explosion in sales of that book, because several publishers published the *Kathamrita* simultaneously and offered it to the public at cheaper prices. In fact, there was a mob scene in the book market on College Street. Thousands and thousands of copies were sold, and thus your message reached almost all Bengali homes.

Ramakrishna: Don't talk about the Bengalis; they are very emotional and sentimental, and their excitement fluctuates like the foam of boiling milk. Most of them buy the *Kathamrita* to keep it in their book case. How many actually read it? Nowadays I see that non-Bengalis and foreigners are studying my life and

message seriously. You are talking about the Bengalis! Listen, they used to call me “Pagla bamun” — mad brahmin. Then when Max Müller, Romain Rolland, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, and Gerald Heard praised my life and message, the Bengalis began to give me a little importance and appreciation.

Reporter: Sir, you are praising only the Western writers, but our Bengali novelist, Achintya Sengupta, wrote 4 volumes “*Parama Purush Ramakrishna*” and Satyajit Ray, the famous cinema director, made the cover for that book. Moreover, many Bengali writers wrote many books on you, composed songs and poems, and some playwrights wrote dramas on you.

Ramakrishna: You see, reporter, I see only the good qualities of a person. I agree that Achintya is a wonderful writer. He has a good command of the language and he can write in an attractive way. In the 1950s, when his book was published, it sold very well. Most people would present *Parama Purush Ramakrishna* to newly married couples, but they did not read it. The bride locked me in her glass-covered book case to show her friends how spiritual she was. Anyhow, Achintya made a lot of money from that book on me. People used to say: “Prabhu, (O Lord), who would have known you, if you were not introduced by Achintya?”

You are talking about other writers? Well, they write books on me just to earn money and fame, because I am popular in the market. But I tell you one thing: No one will be able to write a novel on me. The main theme of a novel is the amorous relationship between a man and a woman. But the smell of lust could not even come near my character. A Western writer tried to write a novel on me, but could not succeed. How could he? He could not connect any woman’s

character with my life. I worshipped my wife and made her a goddess. I told her: “You, my biological mother in the nahabat, and Mother Kali in the temple are the same to me. I see all women as my Divine Mother, and I am Her son.”

Let me tell you my secret: I destroyed all lust and infatuation for women through the mantra “kāmini-kānchan maya” -- woman and gold are maya, illusion. I uprooted greed for money with the mantra “tākā māti, māti tākā” -- money is clay, clay is money. I wiped out the morbid desire for name and fame with the mantra “nām-jash hyāk-thu” -- name and fame are spittle.

You see, reporter, Mathur engaged Lakshmi Bai, the famous courtesan of Calcutta, to test my character. But the moment I saw her, I cried out “Ma, Ma” and went into samadhi. She realized that it would be a great sin to tempt a holy man. She scolded Mathur for bringing a holy man to her. Embarrassed, Mathur hurriedly brought me back to Dakshineswar in his phaeton. I have never enjoyed a woman even in a dream. If a woman touches me I fall ill. That part of my body aches as if stung by a horned fish. After listening to my story, who will try to write a novel about me?

Lakshminarayan Marwari offered 10,000 rupees to me; I refused his offer and asked him not to see me again. The greedy Kali temple officials considered me crazy to the extreme.

People in this world are hankering after name and fame. Mathur looked after me like his Chosen Deity and said, “Father, inside and outside you is nothing but God.” Name and fame did not affect me at all.

Reporter: Sir, a modern writer wrote a humorous story about you and some other famous people of Bengal. Are you interested in hearing about it?

Ramakrishna: Of course. Please tell the whole story. I would like to know what modern writers are thinking about me and taking my ideas.

Reporter: The story is quite long, but I will make a long story short. There were two Nanigopals in Calcutta. By mistake the messenger of Vishnu took the wrong one to heaven. Now when the mistake was caught in the computer, Vishnu asked him to go back to earth. Nanigopal said, "Lord, I have no objection to return to earth, but please give me a guided tour before I go back." To rectify the error, Vishnu asked his attendant to show Nanigopal around. Nani saw that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was writing something with deep concentration. Nani asked him: "What are you writing?" Bankim told him that many people were getting academy prizes and other awards, but he had never received any award, so he was writing a novel. Nani told him, "You are the emperor of Bengali literature. You should not compete with those writers. They have no originality. They steal others' ideas and make them their own by changing the language." Hearing this, Bankim put his pen down and decided not to write.

After that he met the great novelist Sharat Chandra Chatterjee, who was then counting money. When Nani asked him what he was doing, Sharat replied that most of his stories had been turned into movies, so he was checking his income.

He noticed that Rabindranath Tagore was very unhappy. Being asked, Rabindranath said that people were cursing him because they were not getting any sleep. Young people were playing his songs day and night through

loudspeakers during festivals. Nani assured him that the Calcutta Corporation had just made a law that there should be no music after 10:00 p.m.

Finally, Nani met you and saw you reading books with deep concentration. Nani asked: “Master, you never cared for books before and now you are reading books here? You replied: “Nanigopal, nowadays so many writers are writing books about me. I am really amazed. They are putting words in my mouth that I never said. So I am checking which words are mine and which are the creation of those rascals.”

Hearing the story, Sri Ramakrishna laughed and laughed.

Ramakrishna: Nowadays books about me sell very well in the market. So modern writers are writing all sorts of books about me, exaggerating what I say. I have no control over them. They want to make money, and they want name and fame. You can tell your readers that these two books about me are the authentic ones: *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* by Mohindar Gupta (M.) and *Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* by Sharat (Swami Saradananda).

Look, reporter, these were the first publications about me: Rajagopalachari wrote the *Ramakrishna Upanishad*; Ramendra Sundar Bhattacharya wrote the *Ramakrishna Bhagavatam*; Ottur Nambudripad wrote the *Ramakrishna Karnamritam*; Akshay Kumar Sen wrote the *Ramakrishna Punthi*; and Sharat Chakrabarty wrote the *Ramakrishna Panchali*. Afterwards people will write the *Ramakrishna Gita*, *Ramakrishna Purana*, *Ramakrishna Sutra*, *Ramakrishna Shata Nam*, *Ramakrishna Sahasra Nam*, and so on. In the 1950-60’s there were several Bengali movies produced on me, such as *Yugadevata*, *Pagla Thakur*, and *Sri Ramakrishna*.

This is only my 175th birth anniversary. Wait some more years. Sagar Enterprise and Chopra Enterprise of Mumbai will produce TV serials based on my life, as they did for Rama and Krishna with the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vishnu Purana, and Krishna TV serials. Then my message will spread all over India. Eventually, when Hollywood and the Western media get interested in me, I will be known all over the world.

Thank you for having me, reporter!