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Shri Ramakrishna Paramhans Jayanti

Remembering the Great Soul

Ramakrishna is among one of the most revered personalities of all times. He explained the most complex concepts of spiritual philosophies in most simple stories and anecdotes. His words flowed from a deep sense of belief in the Divinity and his experience of embracing God in a very real form. He directed that the ultimate goal of every living soul is realization of God which in itself meant self-realization. Having practiced different facets of Hinduism as well

of other religions, he preached that all of the religions are correct and even though they have different paths, each one of them were lead up to a single goal that is God.

Ramakrishna was born as Gadadhar Chattopadhyay on February 18, 1836 to Khudiram Chattopadhyay and Chandramani Devi. The poor Brahmin family were from the Kamarpukur village of Hoogly district in Bengal. Young Gadadhar was sent to the village school to learn Sanskrit, but his

keenness was not towards studies. He loved to paint and create clay models of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. He was attracted to mythological stories which he had heard from his mother. He gradually leant Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas and other holy literature by heart just by hearing it from priests and sages. Young Gadadhar loved the nature so much that he used to spend much of his time in forests and on the river-banks.

From a very young age, Gadadhar was religiously inclined and he would experience spiritual ecstasy from everyday incidents. He would go into trances while performing pujas or observing a religious drama. After the death of Gadadhar's father in 1843, the responsibility of the family fell on his elder brother, Ramkumar. Ramkumar left home for Calcutta to earn for the family and Gadadhar, back in his village started performing regular worshipping of their family-deity, previously handled by his brother. He was deeply religious and would perform the pujas whole heartedly. Meanwhile, his elder brother had opened a school to teach Sanskrit in Calcutta and served as a priest.

Ramakrishna was married to five-year old Saradamoni Mukhopadhyay from a neighboring village when he was twenty three years of age in 1859. The couple stayed apart until Saradamoni came of age and she joined her husband at Dakshineswar at the age of eighteen. Ramakrishna proclaimed her as the embodiment of Divine Mother and performed the Shodashi Puja with her in the seat of Goddess Kali. She was an ardent follower of her husband's philosophies and took up the role of mother to his disciples with much ease.

The Kali temple at Dakshineswar was established by the celebrated philanthropist Queen of Janbazar, Calcutta, Rani Rashmoni, during 1855. Since the Queen's family belonged to the Kaibarta clan that was considered a lower caste by the Bengali society of the time, Rani Rashmoni was having immense difficulty in finding a priest for the temple. Rashmoni's son-in-law, Mathurbabu came across Ramkumar in Calcutta and invited him to take the position of the head priest at the temple. Ramkumar obliged and sent for Gadadhar to join him at Dakshineswar to assist him in the daily rituals. He arrived at Dakshineswar and was entrusted with the duty of decorating the deity.

Ramakumar died in 1856, leaving Ramakrishna to take over the position of the head priest at the temple. Thus began the long, celebrated journey of priesthood for Gadadhar.

It is said that Mathurbabu, witnessing Gadadhar's piousness and certain supernatural incidents, gave the name Ramakrishna to young Gadadhar.

As a worshipper of Goddess Kali, Ramakrishna was considered a 'Shakto', but the technicalities did not limit him to worship the divine through other spiritual approaches. Ramakrishna was perhaps one of the very few yogis who had tried to experience divinity through a host of different avenues and have not stuck to one single way of spirituality. He schooled under a number of different Gurus and absorbed their philosophies with equal eagerness.

He learned the secrets of 'Tantra Sadhana' or tantric ways from **Bhairavi Brahmani**, a female sage, during 1861-1863. Under her guidance Ramakrishna completed all 64 sadhanas of tantras, even the most intricate and demanding of them. He also learned **Kundalini Yoga** from Bhairavi. Foremost among his innumerable disciples was Swami Vivekananda, who was instrumental in establishing the philosophy of Ramakrishna at a global stage. Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 to carry out the visions of his Guru Ramakrishna and dedicated the establishment in servitude of the society.

In 1885 Ramakrishna suffered from throat cancer. In order to consult the best physicians of Calcutta, Ramakrishna was shifted to a devotee's house in Shyampukur by his disciples. But with time, his health started deteriorating and he was taken to a large house at Cossipore. His condition kept worsening and on 16 August, 1886, he passed away. This brought end to a great legend however his preaching still exists in this world and acts as a guideline for his disciples. The main preaching of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhans can be categorized as:

- *The main aim of each human being is to unite with the God.*
- *Human beings are equal and there is oneness of existence.*
- *All living beings are divine. God is present in all man, woman etc.*
- *To attain salvation, the main obstructions are lust and greed.*
- *There is only one God. All religions have different path to attain salvation but their aim is same and that is God.*