

The God's Throat Cancer

Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj



"Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita is my dictionary," Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj would often remark, emphasizing that it contains the answers to every questions encountered on the Journey of Life and Spiritual Practice.

*February 1982 marked the centenary of the recording of the Kathamrita. It was on the afternoon of **26th February 1882** that **Sri M. (Mahendranath Gupta)**, affectionately known as **Master Mahashaya**, first met **Sri Ramakrishna Deva** at Dakshineswar. Returning home, he carefully recorded the Master's words and conversations. (Read more)*

*Thus began a historic stream of immortal spiritual teachings, which in time emerged as the incomparable classic, **Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita**—a work whose appeal and relevance continue to grow with each passing generation.*

*To commemorate this historic occasion, Maharaj convened a press conference and announced that the **Centenary of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita** would be observed on **26th & 27th February 1982**. He took the initiative to ensure that the celebration would be conducted with the dignity and grandeur it deserved. Maharaj met **Swami Lokeswaranandaji** (Then secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Kolkata), who wholeheartedly supported the proposal and gave his consent for the observance.*

*At the sacred temple of **Maa Bhavatarini, Dakshineswar**, Maharaj beautifully arranged the long platform on the western side of the Natmandir. On the afternoon of **26th February 1982**, the Centenary Celebration of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita was formally inaugurated there.*

Maharaj continued the centenary celebration, organizing programmes in temples, seminar halls, study circles, and devotees' homes without interruption for a year throughout West Bengal and other states of India.

*In **1983**, Maharaj published a commemorative volume containing a concise compilation of the history of the commencement and completion of the recording of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita. The souvenir also featured Maharaj's remarkable research-based essay, **"The God's Throat Cancer," (ভগবানের গলায় ক্যান্সার)** illustrated with a drawing of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Towards the closing days of his final divine play, one day Sri Ramakrishna called Narendranath to him. At that time, he was suffering from unbearable pain in his throat. He could hardly be able to speak, yet there were many things he wished to communicate, so he had called Naren.

Whatever he wished to express, he had written on a small piece of paper. Looking at the writing, it appears that even writing had become difficult for him. He wrote only a few words, yet within those few words he conveyed everything. At the bottom left corner of the paper, he drew a sketch. It was a clear and distinct drawing — a few strokes forming the outline of a human face. The eyes, nose, and mouth were clearly visible. It was a side profile of a face. The head was covered with thick black hair. Near the throat was a round, deep wound-like mark.

Sri Ramakrishna had tried to draw his own image. He was suffering from a severe cancer of the throat. He expressed this through that dark, circular, deep wound-like mark. Cancer — the suffering of an age. The cancer of God. Cancer in the heart of the devotee. Cancer in the throat. Cancer in speech. Cancer in expression. A terrible malignant disease in the message itself.

Perhaps one day that tiny piece of paper will become the source of a great field of research.

Behind the figure was a peacock. It was looking towards the face of the person. It seemed to be approaching from behind. The toes of its feet carried the rhythm of a leaping movement. Its long tail extended behind it. The peacock was not dancing with its feathers spread open, rather it followed with single-minded devotion, with its magnificent plumage folded.

On the paper were written the words:

“Jai Radhe Premomahi. Naren Sikhhe dibe jokhon ghore baire hank dibe. Jai Radhe.”

“Victory to Sri Radha the embodiment of divine love. Naren will teach. When the time comes, he will proclaim it both within the home and outside.”

Naren had strongly objected. He had said: ***“I will not do it. I will never do it.”***

Sri Ramakrishna replied: ***“You must do it. In the course of time, my spiritual realization will manifest itself through you.”***

Through those few words, Sri Ramakrishna intended to say that Naren would raise his voice and proclaim the message both within India and throughout the world. Naren would teach, and that teaching would be none other than his own teaching.

If we carefully observe that small note, we see that the drawing is remarkably precise. The pupil of the human figure’s eye appears to look backward, towards the ear. At the same time, the peacock behind him is gazing forward. The crest on the peacock’s head stands upright. On the chest of the peacock is a dark mark — perhaps a symbol of pain. But the pain is not only present in the picture; it is also present in the writing. In several places the ink appears smudged. It seems as though the ink has fallen at meaningful places. The letters **“Shi”** in the word *shikhhe* (teach) and the letter **“Gho”** in the word *ghore* (home) appear blurred. Indeed, Naren did one day proclaim the message both within and beyond the home. The people outside recognized him sooner, while those within his own homeland understood him much later. The ink stains on the letters **“Shi”** of *shikhhe* and **“Gho”** of *ghore* seem almost symbolic — as though Naren’s call was to wash away that very darkness.

One must remember that Sri Ramakrishna did not casually draw those marks on the paper absent-mindedly. He had specifically summoned Naren and written that note for him. His throat was in pain; speaking was difficult. If He could not speak, if words could not emerge from his throat, if spoken words were forgotten by people, if doubt and forgetfulness weakened his prophecy for the future — then this handwritten document would stand as a witness. A deeper truth has been signed and preserved on that small piece of paper. There was no witness of a scribe. There was no official seal of an office.

Therefore, even though it was written by his own hand, perhaps some people in the future, through ignorance, might still express doubt. That is why He did not leave even that possibility open.

At the beginning he wrote: ***“Victory to Radha, the embodiment of divine love.”***

And at the end he again wrote: ***“Jai Radhe.”***

The beginning and the conclusion of this message cannot be ignored. They shake many of our rigid and habitual ways of thinking and compel us to look anew. It was not the Vedantist’s **Omkara**. It was not the Mother worshipper’s surrender to **Ma Durga**. It was not merely the remembrance of Kali by one approaching the final journey. The teaching of the love-filled Sri Ramakrishna was inscribed clearly through the two sacred syllables of the Radha mantra — the mantra of divine love.

The wound-like mark on the throat of the figure in the drawing is not merely a matter of imagination or contemplation. It is also a symbol of the distorted interpretations, deliberate confusion, and the disease of decay that have affected human understanding. There exists a kind of contagious disease in thought — the belief that whatever is Vedantic must necessarily be wrong; whatever is Puranic must be false; whatever is spiritual must be impractical; whatever touches the heart must be a weakness. It is this very disease that has constricted the voice of humanity. The name **Radha**, written above and below the message, to the left of Sri Krishna, is Sri Ramakrishna’s protest against such distorted thinking. Because such confusion exists, people have misunderstood the ecstatic, overwhelming spiritual experiences of Sri Chaitanya and considered them signs of impatience or weakness. They have regarded his divine dance and devotional singing as expressions of emotional frailty.

They have said:

“That devotion which, taking You as its centre, cannot tolerate patience; which becomes overwhelmed in a moment; which expresses itself through dance and song in a state of divine emotion — such a devotion, intoxicated by emotion, unconscious of knowledge, restless and overflowing like waves of foam, I do not seek, O Lord.”

But **Radha** is not merely that ecstatic, uncontrolled, overflowing stream of devotional emotion. **Radha** is a proud and powerful declaration of divine love. The words ***“Naren will teach”*** — and before and after those words, the name **Radha** — are not merely a repetition of a name. Twice comes the victorious proclamation: ***“Jai Radhe.”*** This is not simply a cry of victory. It is a resonance — a vibration that awakens a thrill in every atom and particle of existence and makes one realize that devotion is also the essence of peace. Devotion is the auspicious vessel filled with the nectar of divine sweetness. At the doorway of the house of worldly life, the eternal stream of devotional nectar continues to flow. It provides strength in every action. It transforms unsuccessful noble efforts into success. It grants fulfilment in joy and welfare. It gives security, radiance, and spiritual illumination. Therefore, with a composed and profound heart, holding back the tears of emotion, one prays: *“Grant me the nectar-filled sweetness of devotion and fill the auspicious vessel at the doorway of the house of life.”* That devotion, which is the immortal nectar, shall spread throughout my entire life — deep, profound, and eternal. It shall give strength to all my actions. It shall transform even my failed noble endeavours into success. It shall bring fulfilment in love, security in sorrow, and radiance in happiness free from suffering.

This is the teaching of divine love. Here, there are no walls, no barriers, and no division. There is no narrowness of sectarianism, no symbol of identity, no flag of separation, and no personal glorification.

It is the eternal, unchanging, infallible, timeless knowledge that is meant for all humanity.

At a time when every nation, every race, every language, and every religion in the world claims only itself to be absolutely correct and considers all others mistaken, Vedanta declares: ***"They are all right."*** The one who accepts the Vedas is right. The one who does not accept the Vedas is also right. The world once wished to believe that this was India's weakness. But today it has been proven before the world that it is precisely this Vedantic vision of India that is conquering hearts everywhere — without war, without violence.

*"The fire that you had kindled within my soul,
that very fire has spread everywhere."*

That eternal sacrificial flame of India was carried across the world by Naren, the boy from Bengal. The first indication of that destiny, the prophecy of that future, was written in that small note: ***"Naren will teach. When the time comes, he will proclaim it both within the homeland and outside."***

Today, the self-serving forces of imperialistic ambition, the masters of deception and cunning, and the followers of artificial reasoning are spending enormous amounts of money and effort to oppose the propagation of Vedanta — to find faults with Vedic and Vedantic thought. But Vedanta remains as calm and steadfast as the Himalayas — silent, stable, and absorbed in its own eternal truth. Those poisonous serpents who are engaged in polluting the atmosphere of the world have declared war against that very divine wisdom. They resemble the tiny destructive organisms that consume the flesh of a body afflicted with cancer.

Cancer in the throat of God. Cancer in the heart of the devotee. Cancer at the very roots of patriotism and national consciousness. Cancer spreading through the pages of truth, religion, and justice.

Therefore, that human face drawn on the small piece of paper is not merely the face of Sri Ramakrishna. It is the face of humanity today and the face of the present age.

Above and below there is only: ***"Jai Radhe."***

However distorted and diseased the face and voice of humanity may become today, there remains a symbol of hope — the tomorrow that follows behind. It is like the peacock. The peacock is approaching with its feathers folded. It is not merely a bird of external beauty and magnificent display. With its curved beak, it has the power to destroy poisonous serpents.

The serpents of ignorance and falsehood are spreading their poisonous breath in every direction. But there is no reason to fear. The peacock is coming from behind. Those who are preparing themselves, for the struggle against the forces of darkness and destruction.