
KESHAB SEN

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The thirteenth chapter of a forthcoming book on Ramakrishna

THE last chapter ended in March 1876, with the death of Chandra Devi. I intentionally left out of it one most important event which took place almost exactly a year earlier; the meeting between Ramakrishna and Keshab Chandra Sen. From a historical point of view, this meeting is so full of significance that it demands a whole chapter to itself. Keshab Sen has been briefly referred to as a prominent Hindu reformer of the nineteenth century. Now I must explain in detail what it was that he wanted to reform, and how his ideas were influenced by the teaching and example of Ramakrishna.

Something has already been said, in chapter four, about the influence of the British upon India. One of the many evils of foreign conquest is the tendency of the conquered to imitate their conquerors. This kind of imitation is evil because it is uncritical; it does not choose certain aspects of the alien culture and reject others, but accepts everything slavishly, with a superstitious belief that if you ape your conquerors you will acquire their superior power.

The British certainly had much to offer India that was valuable: medical science and engineering, the arts of the West, a clearly-defined legal code. Unfortunately, they brought with them also two creeds—scientific atheism and

missionary evangelism—diametrically opposed to each other yet equally narrow and dogmatic. These two creeds had done quite enough harm already in the West, where they were indigenous; exported to India, they had the added power of novelty and threatened to produce spiritual and cultural chaos. The young Indians who came into contact with them nearly all reacted violently. Either they lost belief in everything Hindu and got nothing from England in return but despair; or they were thrilled by the fanaticism and self-assurance of the missionaries and embraced a wretched version of Christianity which was both abject and self-seeking. (Since the missionaries had charge of most of the new educational facilities provided by the British, they got the opportunity to indoctrinate many of the most intelligent students of each generation.) Thus the young were growing up into cultural hybrids; laughed at and despised by the British because of their hopelessly silly efforts at imitation; condemned by orthodox Hindus of the old school as impious traitors to the religion and traditions of their race.

The English missionaries attacked Hinduism as a polytheistic religion; a primitive tangle of cults and idolatry. In this they showed their utter ignorance of the Vedas, which state, again and again, that the substratum of all the many divine forms is Brahman, the one and indivisible. As for the charge of idolatry—"the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone"—it must be remembered that the great majority of missionaries, in Bengal at least, were Protestant. The Catholics could not very well condemn the cult of holy images in theory, though they showed much zeal in destroying those which belonged to other creeds.

Stupid as these accusations were, there were some Hindus who accepted them as a challenge. In spite of their own better knowledge, they had been made by their con-

querors to feel that Hinduism was antiquated, and hence that it should be reformed—purged of superstitions and obsolete customs and thus brought into line with the other world-religions. It might well have been retorted that the other world-religions needed purging, every bit as badly; but here the inferiority complex of the conquered came into play and made the criticism one-sided. We may deplore this mistaken humility, but we must realize that the urge to reform Hinduism was also motivated by a not ignoble kind of patriotism. India—said the reformers to themselves—had been conquered politically, but that was no reason why she should be conquered spiritually as well. Spirituality had always been India's greatest strength; and now India had to assert herself spiritually—as a first step—some of these reformers undoubtedly added—to regaining her political freedom.

The first important reform movement of the nineteenth century was founded by Ram Mohan Roy, who was born in Bengal in 1774. Ram Mohan belonged to an orthodox Brahmin family which he offended by publishing, at the age of sixteen, a book against image worship. He then left home and traveled for some years—visiting, among other places, Tibet, where he studied Buddhist mysticism. He was also sympathetic to the teachings of Christianity and Islam. A distinguished scholar, he knew Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English and some other European languages.

In 1828, Ram Mohan founded what he called the *Brahmo Samaj*, dedicated to "the worship and adoration of the Eternal, the Unsearchable, the Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." (The title, *Brahmo Samaj*, cannot be translated succinctly into English; it means the Society of believers in a personal God without form.) The God of the *Brahmo Samaj* was not the imper-

sonal Brahman, but rather the Hindu Ishwara (see chapter five) or the Mohammedan Allah or the non-trinitarian Godhead of the Unitarians; a personal God without form but with father-attributes. Ram Mohan borrowed something from the teachings of Christianity but denied the divinity of Jesus, just as he denied the divinity of the Hindu avatars. At the same time, he quoted freely from the Hindu scriptures, choosing particularly certain passages from the Upanishads which could be interpreted according to his belief in a personal God without form. And he based his monotheistic philosophy partly on the sacred writings of Islam. The Brahmo Samaj was open to all, without regard to religion or race. Its international appeal was certainly a challenge to the critics of classical Hinduism, but perhaps, in trying to cover such a large area, it spread itself rather too thin. Its real strength was in its programme of social reform, for it demanded the abolition of those very customs to which the British most objected—child-marriage, the veto on the remarriage of widows, and the caste-system itself. The Brahmo Samaj refused to recognize any caste-differences among its own members. It also worked for the emancipation of women and their education along modern lines.

In 1830, Ram Mohan was created a raja by the Emperor of Delhi. (It must be remembered that the British did not claim the imperial title for Queen Victoria until 1877.) He was then sent to England to represent the Emperor and give evidence before a parliamentary committee on the judicial and revenue systems of India. The English politicians and scholars treated the Raja with great respect and admiration; and he had the satisfaction of being present in the House of Commons when the practice of *suttee*—the Hindu widow's voluntary cremation on her husband's funeral pyre—was finally outlawed. He had worked against *suttee* for

many years. In 1833, while still in England, he died suddenly of a brain fever and was buried at Bristol.

Ramakrishna therefore never had the opportunity of meeting Ram Mohan. He did, however, meet Ram Mohan's successor, Devendra Nath Tagore; as we have seen already in chapter eleven. Devendra Nath took over the leadership of the Brahmo Samaj eight years after the Raja's death. During this interval, the movement had greatly weakened, but Devendra Nath reorganized it and soon made it stronger than ever before. He agreed with Ram Mohan in condemning image worship, but he was not much concerned with other world-religions. A monotheist, he drew his inspiration entirely from the Hindu scriptures and fought to prevent Christian ideas from infiltrating the Samaj. On this point he was altogether at variance with his successor, Keshab Chandra Sen.

Keshab was two years younger than Ramakrishna and a whole generation younger than Devendra Nath. He was born in a Bengali family of moderate means and educated at an English school. He did not know Sanskrit. He had little natural sympathy with the popular traditions of Hinduism. He was, indeed, very powerfully influenced by the personality of Jesus, and, if he differed from the Christians it was only because of their claim to possess the one true faith. Keshab held that Jesus, Moses, Buddha and Mohammed should be equally honored.

Some of Keshab's followers carried his neo-Christian ideas even further. They wanted a new, Indian kind of Christianity which should embrace all religions in the name of Jesus Christ. Here is part of an article which appeared in one of the last issues of the *New Dispensation*, a magazine which was founded by Keshab and continued after his death:

"Who rules India? What power is that which sways the

destinies of India at the present moment? It is not the glittering bayonet nor the fiery cannon of the British Army that can make our people loyal. . . . No. If you wish to secure the attachment and allegiance of India, it must be through spiritual influence and moral suasion. And such indeed has been the case in India. You cannot deny that your hearts have been touched, conquered and subjugated by a superior power. That power need I tell you—is Christ. It is Christ who rules British India, and not the British Government. England has sent out a tremendous moral force in the life and character of that mighty prophet, to conquer and hold this vast empire. None but Jesus ever deserved this bright, this precious diadem, India, and Jesus shall have it.” It is amusing to think that this, and other expressions of a similar opinion, must have dismayed the Christian missionaries almost as much as the orthodox Hindus! And, in fact, Keshab’s activities had the effect of much reducing missionary influence in Bengal. At the same time, Keshab was compelled by his own views to break with Devendra Nath Tagore. In 1868, he founded The Brahmo Samaj of India. Devendra Nath retained leadership of the other half of the movement, which was now called the Adi Samaj, or First Brahmo Samaj.

In 1870, Keshab went to England. He was warmly welcomed there, especially by the Unitarians. Queen Victoria herself received him in audience. While at Oxford, he visited Edward Pusey the theologian, in the company of Max Mueller, who describes one of their discussions as follows: “At the end of their conversation the question turned up whether those who were born and bred as members of a non-Christian religion could be saved. Keshab Chandra Sen and myself pleaded for it, Pusey held his ground against us. Much of course depended on what was meant by salvation, and

Keshab defined it as an uninterrupted union with God. 'My thoughts,' he said, 'are never away from God'; and he added, 'my life is a constant prayer, and there are but few moments in the day when I am not praying to God.' This, uttered with great warmth and sincerity, softened Pusey's heart. 'Then you are all right,' he said, and they parted as friends, both deeply moved." This anecdote alone is enough proof that Keshab's nature was capable of great humility and tolerance in the face of provocation; of compassion too, no doubt, for the naturally good-hearted but dogma-bound old man.

In 1875 another Samaj, called the Arya, was founded by Swami Dayananda, a famous Sanskrit scholar. Dayananda worked for the same reforms as Devendra Nath and Keshab, but he was unconditionally opposed to all non-Hindu religious influences in India; Moslem, Christian and Buddhist alike. He was a pugnacious man and the Arya Samaj was a fighting movement. Although he reinterpreted the Vedas to suit his own kind of monotheism, his ideas were sufficiently orthodox to appeal to the masses and not merely the intellectuals. The influence of the Arya Samaj was strongest in the Punjab, where the struggle between Hindus and Moslems was most embittered.

Ramakrishna met Dayananda during one of his visits to Bengal. Mahendranath Gupta once heard him refer to this meeting and has recorded what Ramakrishna said. (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*; October 11, 1884.) "Yes, I went to see him (Dayananda). At that time he was living in a garden-house across the Ganges. Keshab was expected there that day. He was longing to see Keshab as the chatak bird longs for rain." (According to legend, the chatak bird will only drink rain water; it declines all other water, no matter how frantic with thirst it may become. Ramakrishna was fond of

using this bird as a metaphor for intense spiritual thirst.) "He was a great scholar. He believed in the existence of the various deities. Keshab didn't. Dayananda used to say, 'God has created so many things—why couldn't he have created the deities?' Dayananda believed that the Ultimate Reality has no form. Captain (Vishwanath Upadhyaya) was chanting the name of Rama. Dayananda said to him sarcastically, 'you'd do better to keep saying "sandesh"!'" (Sandesh is a kind of sweetmeat made of cheese and sugar. In other words, Dayananda did not approve of making japa, or of any similar devotional practice.)

ONE DAY in March 1875, while Ramakrishna was in samadhi, he felt a prompting to go and visit Keshab. It so happened that he had seen Keshab once, many years before this, when they were both young men. Ramakrishna had seen Keshab meditating at the Brahmo Samaj, which was then still under the undisputed control of Devendra Nath Tagore. With his spiritual insight, he had realized that Keshab was the only one among the devotees present who had achieved a state of true meditation. Now, in samadhi, he had a vision of Keshab in the form of a peacock, with its tail outspread and a ruby adorning its head. The peacock's tail, he later explained, symbolized Keshab's followers and the ruby Keshab's own rajasic nature; his qualities of leadership and proselytizing zeal.

Keshab was engaged in sadhana with his disciples at a garden-house in Belgharia, a few miles to the north of Calcutta. Ramakrishna went to visit him there with Hriday, in a carriage belonging to Captain Vishwanath. On this occasion, Ramakrishna was dressed simply but quite adequately, in a dhoti with a red border, one end of which was thrown over his shoulder. They arrived about an hour after

noon. Getting out of the carriage, Hriday saw Keshab and his disciples seated on a brick-built ghat at the edge of the garden pond. Hriday went first alone to speak to Keshab, just as he had gone into the house of Bhagavan Das, in order to introduce his Uncle. "My Uncle is a great lover of God," he said. "He loves to hear talk and songs about the Lord. When he hears them, he goes into samadhi. He has heard that you are a great devotee, and he has come to listen to you talking about God and his glories. With your kind permission, I'll bring him to you." Keshab of course agreed, and Hriday helped Ramakrishna out of the carriage and led him over to them. Keshab and the others had been awaiting him with keen curiosity, but now they felt disappointed. On first inspection, Ramakrishna did not seem to them to be anyone out of the ordinary.

"Is it true, gentlemen," Ramakrishna asked humbly, "that you have the vision of God? I want so much to know what it's like. That's why I've come to see you." Presently he sang to them—it was a well-known song of Ramprasad's: "Who knows what Kali is? The six philosophies cannot explain her." Immediately after singing, he went into samadhi. Even this did not greatly impress the onlookers. They took Ramakrishna's loss of outer consciousness to be some kind of mental illness, or, worse still, a trick played to impress them. But when Hriday recalled his Uncle to his senses by chanting the name of Om in his ears, and when they saw a smile of dazzling innocence and sweetness overspread Ramakrishna's face, they began to be charmed out of their scepticism. And then Ramakrishna spoke to them, using his favorite, homely parables, comparing the many aspects of God to the different parts of the elephant that the blind men touched, or to the different colors of the chameleon seen at different times by different men—and taken always by their

ignorance to be the *only* aspect, the *only* color. . . . Soon, his hearers were listening and gazing at him enthralled—not so much by his teaching as by the manner of it. They no longer thought him ordinary. Indeed, they felt themselves to be in the presence of an enlightenment which was altogether beyond their understanding. And they were content merely to remain in that presence. They were unaware that the time for the next meal had long since gone by, and that they were even in danger of omitting the next period of prayer. It amused Ramakrishna to see this change in their attitude. He said to them, smiling, “if any other kind of animal comes to a herd of cattle, they’ll turn on it and gore it with their horns. But, if a cow joins the herd, they’ll lick its body and welcome it as one of themselves. . . . That’s what has happened to us here today.” Then, addressing Keshab, he added, “your tail has dropped off.” This odd-sounding remark startled and displeased Keshab’s disciples; they took it at first for some kind of insult. But Ramakrishna went on to explain, “as long as the tadpole has its tail, it can only live in the water, it can’t come on land; but, when the tail drops off, it can live on land as well as in the water. As long as a man wears the tail of ignorance, he can only live in the world; but, when the tail drops off, he can live either in the knowledge of God or in the world, whichever he pleases. Your mind, Keshab, has reached that state now. You can live in the world and still be aware of God.”

FROM that day onward to the end of his life, Keshab remained under the influence of Ramakrishna. True, he did not yield to this influence immediately or unconditionally. At first he mistrusted his own judgment and sent some of his followers over to Dakshineswar to observe Ramakrishna and report their impressions of him. And even much later, when

Keshab had become absolutely convinced of Ramakrishna's spiritual greatness, he was still tormented by the conflict between his own previous ideas and prejudices and Ramakrishna's teachings. Nevertheless, the influence grew in strength, until Keshab found that he could hardly endure to stay away from Ramakrishna for more than a few days at a time. Sometimes he would come to Dakshineswar; sometimes he would invite Ramakrishna to visit him at his house in Calcutta, which was called the Kamal Kutir, the Lily Cottage. Sometimes Keshab and a party of Brahmo devotees would take Ramakrishna for a steamer trip on the Ganges, so that they could enjoy his society without fear of any intrusion.

Although Keshab was now one of the most famous men in India, and was himself looked up to as a teacher, he always treated Ramakrishna with the utmost humility and respect. Whenever they met, Keshab brought the offering of fruits which is traditional when the pupil visits his guru. And, like a devoted pupil, Keshab would seat himself at Ramakrishna's feet. Once, Ramakrishna said to him playfully, "Keshab, you delight so many people with your lectures—please expound something to me, too!" To which Keshab replied, "Sir, am I to sell needles in a blacksmith's shop?" (The Indian proverbial equivalent of "carrying coals to Newcastle.") "Please talk and let me listen. People are delighted whenever I tell them anything you have told me."

One day, Ramakrishna said to Keshab that, if one admits the existence of Brahman, one must also necessarily admit the existence of Brahman's Power, through which the universe is created—since Brahman and its Power are eternally one and the same. To this Keshab agreed. Ramakrishna then told him that the Scriptures, the Devotee and God are also one and the same. To this also Keshab agreed.

Ramakrishna next told him that the Teacher, God and the Devotee are also one. But Keshab became disturbed and perplexed. At length, he said respectfully, "Sir—just now I can't accept anything more. Please, let us not speak of this for the present." "Very well," Ramakrishna told him. "Then we'll stop there."

IN 1878, a scandal split the Brahmo Samaj. The Maharaja of Cooch-Bihar had asked for the hand of Keshab's daughter. The marriage was one of the most brilliant that a Hindu girl could possibly have made, and Keshab agreed to it. There is no reason to suppose that he did this from motives of self-interest, because of the Maharaja's rank and huge wealth; no doubt he was thinking only of his daughter's future. Unfortunately, however, the girl was not yet quite fourteen years old, and so Keshab was acting against one of his own publicly declared objectives: the abolition of child-marriage. Immediately a conflict broke out and two parties were formed—one defending Keshab, the other condemning him as the worst of traitors and hypocrites. The opposition party then left The Brahmo Samaj of India and founded a movement of its own, called the General Brahmo Samaj.

When Ramakrishna heard of this schism, he was much distressed. He had never approved of Keshab's campaign against child-marriage. "Birth, death and marriage are all subject to the will of God," Ramakrishna had said. "They can't be made to obey hard and fast rules. Why does Keshab try to make such rules?" Nevertheless, if anybody spoke of the Cooch-Bihar marriage in Ramakrishna's presence and blamed Keshab, Ramakrishna would defend him: "How is Keshab to blame? He's a family man. Why shouldn't he do what he thinks best for his sons and daughters? He wasn't acting against religion or morality. He has only done

his duty as a father." Ramakrishna refused to take sides in the quarrel, and remained on friendly terms with members of both movements.

One of the most prominent of these was Vijay Krishna Goswami. After the Cooch-Bihar schism he had become a leader of the newly-formed General Samaj. He visited Ramakrishna often and would tell everyone he met that Ramakrishna was the greatest soul in India, bewailing the blindness of those who could not recognize this fact. He used to say to Ramakrishna, "Dakshineswar is so near to Calcutta—we can visit you whenever we like; there are plenty of boats and carriages. If we don't understand you and value you highly enough, it's only because you're so near home and so easily available. If you were sitting on a mountain top, and we had to walk miles without food and climb precipices to reach you, clinging on to the roots of trees—then we would know what a treasure you are. As it is, we imagine there must be better teachers living far away from here; and so we run seeking them this way and that way, and put ourselves to endless trouble for nothing."

As for Ramakrishna, he thought very highly of Vijay's spiritual attainments. "Vijay has reached the room just next to the innermost chamber," he would say, "and now he's knocking at its door."

Before the schism, Keshab and Vijay had been good friends; after it, they stopped seeing each other. However, as both continued to visit Ramakrishna regularly, a meeting between them was sooner or later inevitable. Mahendranath Gupta tells us that Vijay was sitting with Ramakrishna in his room at Dakshineswar, on the afternoon of October 27, 1882, when some of Keshab's followers arrived with an invitation. Keshab had chartered a steamboat which had just dropped anchor opposite the temple com-

pound; would Ramakrishna go out with them in a rowboat to the steamer and join him? Ramakrishna agreed, and Vijay went along with him—we are not told how willingly or unwillingly.

The encounter could hardly have begun more embarrassing. No sooner was Ramakrishna in the rowboat than he went into deep samadhi. They had difficulty in getting him on board the steamer. Partially conscious of his surroundings but still moving stiffly and mechanically, he was helped downstairs into a cabin. Keshab and the others bowed to him. He did not seem to recognize them. He was placed in a chair. Keshab and Vijay sat down on two others. As many devotees as could squeeze into the cabin squatted on the floor; the rest peered in through the door and the windows, which had to be opened because the cabin had already become terribly stuffy. Meanwhile, Ramakrishna went back into deep samadhi. Keshab and Vijay were thus left virtually alone together, awkwardly enthroned in the midst of this audience which was, no doubt, eagerly curious to see if they would show any signs of their hostility. They appear to have behaved with formal politeness.

Gradually, Ramakrishna returned to external consciousness. He whispered to himself, "Mother, why have you brought me here? They're shut in. They're not free. Can I free them?" A Brahmo devotee spoke to him of a holy man whom some of them had visited, and added, "he keeps a photograph of you in his room, Sir." This seemed to amuse Ramakrishna. Pointing to his body and smiling, he said, "it's just like a pillowcase." A train of ideas had thus been started, bringing him back, as it so often did, to the plane of consciousness on which he was able to speak as a teacher. And now he began to talk to them, with charming informality and humor, about the heart of the devotee which is the

"favorite parlor" of God, about the dream which we call our life, about the dance of Mother Kali. He compared the Divine Mother just before the recreation of the universe to a housewife who keeps a pot of seeds ready for the next sowing. He imitated the sound of the English language: *Foot fut it mit*. He sang hymns to Kali and Durga. His hearers were so delighted that they did not want the voyage to end, and Keshab asked the captain to steam a little further down the river. Puffed rice and grated cocoanut were served. Everyone was enjoying himself.

Yet there was still a constraint between Keshab and Vijay. Ramakrishna noticed it and said to Keshab, with his characteristic forthrightness, "look—here is Vijay. Your quarrel reminds me of the fight between Shiva and Rama. Shiva was Rama's guru. They fought each other but they soon made it up again. It was their followers, Shiva's ghosts and Rama's monkeys, who went on making faces and chattering at each other; they wouldn't stop! You have a religious society, so Vijay thinks he has to have one too. That's quite natural. While Sri Krishna, who was incarnate God himself, was happy in the company of the gopis at Vrindavan—even then, those two troublemakers, Jatila and Kutila, had to appear on the scene. Why? Because the plot cannot thicken without troublemakers. Without Jatila and Kutila there's no fun." Ramakrishna's affectionate teasing of Keshab and Vijay had been greeted by loud laughter, and now the two leaders were forced to become reconciled with each other. But Keshab's "ghosts" and Vijay's "monkeys" continued to carry on the feud, just as Ramakrishna had hinted that they would.

THE public recriminations caused by the Cooch-Bihar marriage had had one good result; Keshab now began to feel

a distaste for all the vanities of public life and a longing for spiritual experience. Under Ramakrishna's influence, he now accepted many Hindu rituals and symbolic acts which he had previously rejected as meaningless: the offering of oblations, bathing in consecrated water, shaving the head, wearing the ocher-dyed cloth. Within two years, he had formulated and begun to preach a new creed which he called "The New Dispensation." "The New Dispensation" was, fundamentally, a presentation of Ramakrishna's teachings—as far as Keshab was able to understand them. What chiefly appealed to Keshab in Ramakrishna was his universality, and particularly the fact that he had had the vision of Jesus of Nazareth. But, over and above this, he regarded Ramakrishna as a living embodiment of his creed. When he came to Dakshineswar he would bow down before Ramakrishna and symbolically take the dust of his feet, exclaiming, "victory to the Dispensation! Victory to the Dispensation!" It was through Keshab that Ramakrishna first became known to the general public of Calcutta, and this was only the beginning of a fame which was to spread throughout India and the world.

Ramakrishna delighted in Keshab's spiritual growth. He now began to appear frequently, unannounced, at meetings of the Brahmo Samaj, joining with the Brahmo devotees in their *kirtan* (singing of religious songs). Not unnaturally, the Brahmos were encouraged by his visits to regard him as their exclusive property and to imagine that he shared their particular beliefs and theirs only. They could not understand that Ramakrishna's absorption in God made him eager to take part in religious observances of any kind.

Ramakrishna tried to wean the Brahmos away from their excessive preoccupation with social reform and turn their

minds toward meditation and the realization of God. But he knew human nature and did not expect too much of them. "I have said whatever came into my head," he used to tell them. "Take as much of it as you want. You can leave out the head and the tail." Later in his life, he would describe the Brahmo meetings to his own disciples: "I went to Keshab's house and watched them praying. After the speaker had talked a long time about the glories of God, he said, 'let us now meditate on him.' I wondered how long they'd meditate. But, oh dear, they'd scarcely had their eyes shut for two minutes before it was all over! How can one know God by meditating like that? While they were meditating, I was watching their faces. Afterwards, I said to Keshab: 'I've seen a lot of you meditate, and do you know what it reminded me of? Troops of monkeys sometimes sit quietly under the trees at Dakshineswar, just as if they were perfect gentlemen, quite innocent. But they aren't. They're sitting thinking about all those gourds and pumpkins that householders train to grow over their roofs, and about all the gardens full of plantains and eggplants. After a little while, they'll jump up with a yell and rush away to the gardens to stuff their stomachs. I saw many of you meditating like that.' And when they heard that, they laughed."

Ramakrishna would also try to correct the Brahmos' ideas about worship. "Why," he would ask them, "are you always talking so much about the various powers of God? Does a child who's sitting beside his Father keep thinking how many horses, cows, houses and estates his Father has? Isn't he simply happy to feel how much he loves his Father and how much his Father loves him? The father feeds and clothes the child—and why shouldn't God? After all, we are his children. If he looks after us, is that so extraordi-

nary? So, instead of dwelling on that, a real devotee makes God his very own, through love. He begs—no, he demands that his prayers shall be answered and that God shall reveal Himself to him. If you dwell so much on God's powers, you can't think of him as your nearest and dearest—and so you can't feel free to demand things of him. Thinking about his greatness makes him seem distant from his devotee. Think of him as your very own. That's the only way to realize him."

Ramakrishna did succeed to a large extent in curing the Brahmos of their unreasonable fear of image worship, which was based on the conviction that God is without form. Some of them, at least, began to understand what Ramakrishna meant when he said, "you should never set limits to God's nature"—that God is both with form and formless.

In the meeting of Ramakrishna and Keshab, we may see an epitome of the meeting between what was eternally alive in the Hindu tradition and what was noblest in the ideas of the West. Ramakrishna himself was no reformer, and he did not worry at all about the effects of Western culture upon India—believing, as he did, that nothing could have happened or would happen without the sanction of the Divine Mother. But the Brahmo Samaj and its kindred movements were destined, as we shall presently see, to exert an important influence, both direct and indirect, upon Ramakrishna's disciples and hence upon the Mission which bears his name.