



## Critical Evaluation of Ramakrishna's Behaviour – A Psychoanalytic Perspective

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**Abstract:** *Ramakrishna is a mystic in its real sense of the term. Any mystic is considered by psychoanalysts, as having a certain kind of mental disorder. Therefore, here it is attempted to do some analysis of the psychology of religion and mystic with the help of the great thinker and American psychologist William James and a distinguished psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar. Ramakrishna can be said to be a "mystic" in its true sense of the term. The mystical consciousness or mystical behaviour is so much away and above the normal state of consciousness that the psychologists in general and psychoanalysts in particular, tend to consider mystical behaviour to be "abnormal" behaviour. Thus, because the mystical behaviour does not constitute the behaviour of the 68% of the population, it is normally considered to be 'abnormal' behaviour in the empirical science of psychology. However, with the advent of humanistic psychology of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, the above-normal behaviour is being recognized as the 'self-actualization' state of personality development. Abraham Maslow has described the characteristics of self-actualized people which are not considered as the pathological behaviour of 'below-normal' category. And Ramakrishna's behaviour is the behaviour of a self-realized person, which is still above than even the behaviour of self-actualized persons. However, especially, Ramakrishna's behaviour being of a unique mystical pattern, a number of psychoanalysts, unaware of the psychology of religion in general and of Eastern religion in particular, have been tempted to interpret his behaviour as pathological or schizophrenic. This being so, an attempt is made here to analyze Ramakrishna's mystical behaviour in the light of the three eminent psychologists, namely, William James, Sudhir Kakar and Jeffery Kripal. For, William James said that, "it is not only the sexual life, but the entire higher mental life which awakens during adolescence. One might then as well set up the thesis that the interest in mechanics, physics, chemistry, logic, philosophy, and sociology, which springs up during adolescent years along with that in poetry and religion, is also a perversion of the sexual instinct:- but that would be too absurd. Thus the reinterpretation of psychoanalysis is needed in this light.*

*Ramakrishna put it on logical ground that logically how it is possible that one becomes unconscious by constantly thinking of the Consciousness. "Mad! That is the thing! Shivnath once said that 'one loses one's head' by thinking too much of God. What said I, 'Can anyone ever become unconscious by thinking of consciousness? God is of the nature of Eternity, Purity and Consciousness. Through his consciousness one becomes conscious of everything; through his intelligence the whole world appears intelligent. (Gospel, 615) Knowing fully well and aware of the so-called pathological signs of the mystic, Ramakrishna himself had described these signs and clearly and logically argued how they are not really pathological. As he says, "It is said in the Bhagavatama that a man who has seen God behaves sometimes like a child, sometimes like a ghou, sometimes like an inert thing and sometimes like a madman. For he maintains the same attitude toward things holy and unholy. Therefore he seems to be a lunatic." (Gospel: 451-452,493,791) Thus, the most important criterion or proof of the above-normal aspect of the mystic is that he becomes free from the shackles of the passions like lust, anger etc. In this way, Ramakrishna has defined logically and experientially the so-called insanity of the realized religious geniuses. Further, in present research we gave justification of Ramakrishna's behaviour given by Sudhir Kakar against wrongly conceived notions of Jeffery Kripal. It is put in the paper the Difference between the concept of self-actualization of Maslow and the concept of self-realization in Ramakrishna Narrating Maslow's last thinking, Boereen says that toward the end of his life, he inaugurated what he called the fourth force in psychology: Freudian and other 'depth' psychologies constituted the first force; Behaviorism was the second force; His own humanism, including the European existentialists, were the third force. The fourth force was the "transpersonal psychologies" which, taking their cue from Eastern philosophies, investigated such things as meditation, higher levels of consciousness, and even parapsychological phenomena. It is important to note that as it is seen earlier that Ramakrishna do not believe in any occult powers which are considered sometimes as parapsychological phenomena. Then, we can say that Ramakrishna's mysticism is even beyond the "forth force" mentioned by Maslow.*

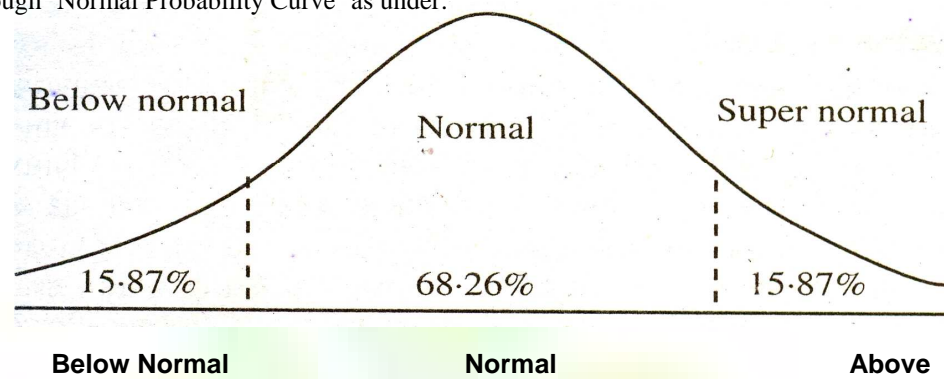
*In addition to this, Kripal's misconceived assumptions about Ramakrishna's mystical behaviour are being criticized in this research with the help of Somanath Benaerjee's (Prof. of Psychology) interpretation of the truth of the mystical behaviour.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Ramakrishna is a mystic in its real sense of the term. Any mystic is considered by psychoanalysts, as having a certain kind of mental disorder. Therefore, here it is attempted to do some analysis of the psychology of religion and mystic with the help of the great thinker and American psychologist William James and a distinguished psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar.

Ramakrishna can be said to be a "mystic" in its true sense of the term. The mystical consciousness or mystical behaviour is so much away and above the normal state of consciousness that the psychologists in general and psychoanalysts in particular, tend to consider mystical behaviour to be "abnormal" behaviour. It is important to clarify here what the word "abnormal" means in psychology. Etymologically, the word abnormal=ab+normal. 'ab' means 'away' and 'normal' means 'according to norms'. Thus, abnormal means "away from normal." Normal behaviour in psychology means the average behaviour of the 68% of the

population. Thus, normal behaviour in psychology does not mean the “Ideal behaviour as per the norm”, but ‘normal’ in psychology means the behaviour that 68% of the people would perform in a particular situation. The word ‘normal’ has been defined in psychology through ‘Normal Probability Curve’ as under:



The behaviour that comes within this 68% area of the curve is said to be ‘normal’ and below (16%) and above (16%) the average behaviour is said to be ‘abnormal’. Thus, because the mystical behaviour does not constitute the behaviour of the 68% of the population, it is normally considered to be ‘abnormal’ behaviour in the empirical science of psychology. However, with the advent of humanistic psychology of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, the above-normal behaviour is being recognized as the ‘self-actualization’ state of personality development. Abraham Maslow has described the characteristics of self-actualized people which are not considered as the pathological behaviour of ‘below-normal’ category. And Ramakrishna’s behaviour is the behaviour of a self-realized person, which is still above than even the behaviour of a self-actualized person.

However, especially, Ramakrishna’s behaviour being of a unique mystical pattern, a number of psychoanalysts, unaware of the psychology of religion in general and of Eastern religion in particular, have been tempted to interpret his behaviour as pathological or schizophrenic. This being so, an attempt is made here to analyze Ramakrishna’s mystical behaviour in the light of the three eminent psychologists, namely, William James, Sudhir Kakar and Jeffery Kripal.

## II. WILLIAM JAMES

Eminent American psychologist William James says that, to the psychologist the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution. From the logical point of view, there are the two entirely different orders of questions which should be considered by psychologists who want to study the psychology of religion. They are as under:

1. What are the religious propensities?
2. What is their philosophical significance?

William James said that in the recent books on logic, the distinction is made between the two orders of inquiry concerning anything. Among these two, the first question deals with the nature, constitution, origin, history of the subject of inquiry, while the second question deals with the importance, meaning, significance of the subject of inquiry. Here, the important point to be noted is that the answer to the first question will be of the nature of an existential judgment. But the answer to the second question, which is related to the problem of understanding the meaning of religion and religious behaviour, will be of a proposition of value. Thus, the religious behaviour is not of the type of existential judgment in the above mentioned term. However, as Spinoza says, “I will analyze the actions and appetites of men as if it were a question of lines, of planes, and of solids”, one should not ignore to study these so-called pathological behaviour. While not ignoring the study of this type of behaviour, one should remember that all the religious behaviour should be studied considering them as natural as any other above normal or genius behaviour. James says that, a more fully developed example of the same kind of reasoning is the fashion, quite common nowadays among certain writers, of criticizing the religious emotions by showing a connection between them and the sexual life. James has defined the religious ‘genius’ and suggested to study them. He says, “We must make search rather for the original experiences which were the pattern-setters to all this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct. These experiences we can only find in individuals for whom religion exists not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever rather. But such individuals are ‘geniuses’ in the religious line; and like many other geniuses who have brought forth fruits effective enough for commemoration in the pages of biography.”

James says that following are the characteristics observed in religious ‘geniuses’.

1. Religious geniuses are found to be exceptional and eccentric.
2. They have shown symptoms of nervous instability.
3. Religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations.
4. They have been the subject of exalted emotional sensibility.
5. Often they have led a discordant inner life.
6. Often they had melancholy during a part of their career.
7. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas.
8. Frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, and seen visions.
9. Often, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence.



Thus, James says that the religious geniuses presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Regarding Ramakrishna's somewhat this type of behaviour, as a rational being even; Swami Vivekananda also formerly believes such visions as hallucinations. Ramakrishna says, Narendra said to me, 'The forms of God that you see are the fiction of your mind'. You (Narendra) used to say, at first, that 'these were all hallucinations'. On that Swami Vivekananda says, "How was I to know? Now I see that you are always right." (Gospel: 511,772)

Thus, according to William James, religious experiences of even great masters have shown above stated features which are termed in psychology as "pathological".

#### **1. ANSWER TO THE PATHOLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR:**

It is true that the above stated features of religious experiences are of course, not "normal" phenomena. They cannot be classified as "normal" behaviour because, they are not observed in 68% of the normal population as per the Normal Probability Curve. However, as discussed earlier, anything that is not normal, cannot be necessarily classified as abnormal or pathological. All the above-normal behaviour of the "geniuses", scientists, mystics or artists is not at all normal behaviour. But they cannot be called pathological. Creativity, originality and geniuses also demonstrate above-normal personality traits and behaviour.

#### **2. WILLIAM JAMES GIVES THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEMS UNDER:**

Psychologists will say that there are two main phenomena of religion, namely, melancholy and conversion, are essentially phenomena of adolescence, and therefore synchronous with the development of sexual life.

To which he answers that even were the asserted synchrony unrestrictedly true as a fact (which it is not), it is not only the sexual life, but the entire higher mental life which awakens during adolescence. One might then as well set up the thesis that the interest in mechanics, physics, chemistry, logic, philosophy, and sociology, which springs up during adolescent years along with that in poetry and religion, is also a perversion of the sexual instinct:- but that would be too absurd.

Further, giving another argument, he says, if the synchrony is to decide, what is to be done with the fact that the religious age par excellence would seem to be old age, when the uproar of the sexual life is past? (James: Lecture-1)

#### **3. RAMAKRISHNA'S ANSWER TO THIS PROBLEM:**

Ramakrishna put it on logical ground that logically how it is possible that one becomes unconscious by constantly thinking of the Consciousness. Mad! That is the thing! Shivanath once said that 'one loses one's head' by thinking too much of God. What said I. 'Can anyone ever become unconscious by thinking of consciousness? God is of the nature of Eternity, Purity and Consciousness. Through his consciousness one becomes conscious of everything; through his intelligence the whole world appears intelligent. Shivanath said that some Europeans had gone insane, that they had 'lost their head', by thinking too much about God. In their case it may be true; for they think of worldly things. There is a line in a song: 'Divine fervour fills my body and robs me of consciousnesses. The consciousness referred to here is the consciousness of the outer world.' (Gospel: 615) Too much thinking of material things may be harmful, but the Divinity Itself is the Nectar, then, thinking of that never become harmful, rather, it is helpful to regain our real consciousness. Ramakrishna called the Consciousness the 'Nectar Lake'. He says, the 'Nectar Lake' is the lake of Immortality. A man sinking in it does not die, but becomes immortal. Some people believe that by thinking of God too much the mind becomes deranged; but that is not true. God is the lake of Nectar, the ocean of Immortality. Sinking in it, one does not die, but verily transcends death. (Gospel: 115,108,674-75)

#### **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-REALIZED SOUL ACCORDING TO RAMAKRISHNA:**

Knowing fully well and aware of the so-called pathological signs of the mystic, Ramakrishna himself had described these signs and clearly and logically argued how they are not really pathological. As he says, "It is said in the Bhagavatama that a man who has seen God behaves sometimes like a child, sometimes like a ghou, sometimes like an inert thing and sometimes like a madman. For he maintains the same attitude toward things holy and unholy. Therefore he seems to be a lunatic." (Gospel: 451-452,493,791) Further he says, "He (Vijun) is sometimes like an inert thing, sometimes, like a ghou, sometimes like a child and sometimes like a mad man. People noticed his ways and actions and think of his as insane or sometimes he is like a child-no bondage, no shame, no hatred, no hesitation, or the like. One reaches this state of mind after having the vision of God. Lust, anger, and the other passions cannot exist after the vision of God." (Gospel: 405,476,678)

Thus, the most important criterion or proof of the above-normal aspect of the mystic is that he becomes free from the shackles of the passions like lust, anger etc. In this way, Ramakrishna has defined logically and experientially the so-called insanity of the realized religious geniuses.

### **III. SUDHIR KAKAR ON RAMAKRISHNA'S MYSTICAL BEHAVIOUR**

Sudhir Kakar, an eminent Indian psychoanalyst had nicely discussed the psychoanalysis of Ramakrishna's behaviour in his book, "The Analyst and the Mystic: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Religion and Mysticism." Kakar's analysis of Ramakrishna's behaviour is described briefly in the following manner:

#### **1. KAKAR'S ARGUMENT AGAINST THE PATHOLOGY OF RAMAKRISHNA'S BEHAVIOUR:**

Sudhir Kakar, being a psychoanalyst prefers Ramakrishna for analysis because according to him Ramakrishna most aptly represents Hindu mysticism and the "Oceanic Feeling" as described by Freud. As Kakar says, "The individual I have selected for my own explorations is the nineteenth-century Bengali mystic ar Ramakrishna. Together with Rama, Ramakrishna is widely



regarded as the preeminent figure of Hindu mysticism of the last three hundred years, whatever preeminence may mean in the mystical context. He is a particularly apt choice for a psychoanalytic study of ecstatic mysticism since Freud's observations on the mystical experience, on what he called the 'oceanic feeling', an omnibus label for all forms of extreme mystical experience, were indirectly occasioned by Ramakrishna's ecstasies." (Kakar, 1991: 6)

When Romain Rolland was writing a biography of Ramakrishna, he has wrote to Freud in 1927 that though his analysis of religion in his book "The Future of an Illusion" was 'Juste' (apt), he would ideally have liked Freud to make an analysis of spontaneous religious feeling, or more exactly, religious sensations which are entirely different from religion proper and much more enduring. [Harrison I. B., 1979:409] (Kakar, 1991:7) Romain Rolland went to call this sensation oceanic, without perceptible limits. And added that Romain Rolland himself had all his life found the oceanic feeling to be a source of vital revival. Freud's response to Rolland, his analysis of the "oceanic feeling" was then spelled out in "civilization of its Discontents". It is highly probable that the term "oceanic feeling" it is taken from Ramakrishna's (salt-doll) imagery to describe the ineffable." (Kakar, 1991: 7)

Kakar says that "ocean as a symbol for boundless oneness and unity in which multiplicities dissolve and opposites fuse not only goes back to the Upanishads in the Hindu tradition, but is one of the preferred metaphors of devotional mystics for the melting of ego boundaries in the Buddhist, Christian and Muslim traditions as well." [Dushan, 1989: manuscript] Christian mystics, for instance, have been greatly fond of the metaphor. "I live in the ocean of God as a fish in the sea." (Kakar, 1991: 7)

Thus, the frequently used term and analyzed by Freud is the "oceanic feeling" representing the mystical experience in general and Hindu mysticism in particular. This oceanic feeling was the basic characteristic of Ramakrishna's mystical experiences and its narrations. This being so, Kakar has deeply analyzed Ramakrishna's mystical experiences within psychoanalytic framework in his above mentioned book.

Kakar gave argument against the people who consider mystical behaviour as pathological. His views are as under:

1. Kakar says, many analysts interested in the phenomenon would now agree that in spite of superficial resemblances, the mystical retreat is neither as complete nor as compelling and obligatory as psychotic regression. Moreover, in contrast to the psychotic, the mystic's ability to maintain affectionate ties remains unimpaired when it does not actually get enhanced.
2. Secondly, to the psychoanalysts whose contention that mystical experiences are nothing but the outcome of psychological disorder, we can say that given the analyst's commitment to Freud's dictum that the capacity "to love and work" is perhaps the best outer criterion for mental health, then the mystic's performance on both counts is impressive-that is, if one can succeed in emancipating one's self from a circumscription of the notions of love and work dictated by convention.
3. Thirdly, some of the more recent work in psychoanalysis recognizes that mystical states lead to more rather than less integration of the person. (Horton C., 1974: 364-80) David Aberbach D., 1987: 509-26)
4. Further, giving Romain Rolland's testimony, Kakar says, "In the time of Ramakrishna and till today, many believe Ramakrishna as a insane on the ground of psychoanalysis of Freud." Sudhir Kakar has shown what Freud himself say about the experiences of Ramakrishna, when Freud was asked by Romain Rolland in this context. Sudhir Kakar says that in fact, what I would like to do here is address the question Romain Rolland, in writing of Ramakrishna's initial trances, posed for 'physicians both of the body and of the mind', namely, "There is no difficulty in proving the apparent destruction of his whole mantle structure, and the disintegration of its elements. But how were they reassembled into a synthetic entity of the highest order?" (Rolland R., 1986: 38) To put it differently, how does the mystic become master of his madness and of his reason alike whereas the schizophrenic remains their slave? This shows the difference between the two.

#### IV. DIFFERENT BETWEEN VISIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS

The most prevalent feature of Ramakrishna's mystical behaviour was the various types of visions as experienced by him. It is because of these visions that the people in general and psychoanalysts in particular were led to consider them as hallucinations and delusions and thereby to diagnose Ramakrishna as schizophrenic or psychotic. This being so, a detailed analysis of Ramakrishna's visions and Kakar's comments on them are discussed here in detail.

Showing the difference between mystical visions and hallucinations, Sudhir Kakar says, that in my own explorations, I prefer to use the religious term vision rather than its psychiatric counterpart hallucination for the same reason that I have talked of mystical ecstasy rather than of euphoria, namely the connotations of psychopathology associated with psychiatric categories. The distinction between the two, though, is not very hard and fast, their boundaries constantly shifting. Both can be produced by severe depression or manic excitement, toxic psychosis due to exhaustion or starvation or sensory deprivation or simply a febrile illness. What is important in distinguishing them is their meaning and content and not their origin.

Visions are like hallucinations in that they too are images, such as flashes of light, which are visually perceived without the external stimulation of the organ of sight. They are, however, not hallucination in that they occur during the course of intense religious experience rather than during a psychotic episode. They are thus less bizarre and less disorganized. Visions belong more to the realm of perceptions that take place, say, during a dream, while falling asleep (hypnagogic) or when awakening (hypnopompic). None of these can be called a consequence of psychic impairment. Visions are, then, special kinds of dreams which find their way into waking life.

In short, visions of mystics may have some reality basis and hence, they are not necessarily signs of mental disorder like hallucinations.



### 1. **BODILY SIGNS:**

The effects of mystical experience are also manifested in the body, and Ramakrishna's visions had certain well-defined physical correlates. At times, he would shudder while tears of joy streamed unchecked down his cheeks. At other times, his eyes would become half-closed and unfocused, a faint smile playing around the mouth while his body became completely rigid and had to be supported by a disciple lest he fall and hurt himself. The accompaniment to certain other trance states was a fly shed chest or a strong burning sensation all over the body. Then there is the feeling of being famished-one wonders spiritual receptivity with a bodily analogue or there are the bouts of gluttony in which he consumed enormous quantity of food, generally sweets. The craving for a particular dish or a sweet would come upon Ramakrishna unexpectedly, at any time of night or day. At these moments, Ramakrishna would be like a pregnant woman who is dominated by her obsession and cannot rest till the craving is satisfied.

Kakar says that from inside the tradition, all these manifestations are some of the nineteen bodily signs of the mystical experience. (Kakar, 1991:24) Thus, in mystical tradition, the bodily signs are also described. This clearly suggests that visions and other bodily signs, though resemble the pathological state, actually they are totally different experiences of altered states of consciousness, underlying normal if not higher level of personality formation.

### 2. **NIGHTMARES:**

Ramakrishna once says, "I would spit on the ground when I saw them. But they would follow me and obsess me like ghosts. On the day after such a vision I would have a severe attack of diarrhoea, and all these ecstasies would pass out through my bowels." (Gupta, *Vacanamṛta*, vol.3, 238-89) (Kakar, 1991:25)

Such hallucinations, or better, nightmarish visions, are not alien but perhaps as much a part of Ramakrishna's personality as is his artistic sensibility or his more elevated, mystical visions as observed in Ernest Hartmann's work on nightmares. (Hartmann E., 1984) (Kakar, 1991:25)

In his study of non-psychiatric volunteers who suffered from nightmares since childhood, Hartmann found that these subjects were usually sensitive people with a strong artistic bent and creative potential. More important, they demonstrate what he calls "thin boundaries of the mind," a permeability between self and object, waking/sleeping, fantasy/reality, adult/child, human/animal and other such boundaries, which are relatively fixed for most people. Ramakrishna, and perhaps most other mystics, have a genetic biological predisposition, reinforced by some early experiences of thin boundaries, also between nightmarish and ecstatic visions. (Kakar, 1991:25) Thus, Ramakrishna had the visions what psychology termed as nightmarish as well as he has ecstatic visions. The visions of Ramakrishna, which can be defined in the terms of psychology as nightmarish, also suggest creative potential rather than personality disintegration.

### 3. **CONSCIOUS VISIONS:**

The other class of visions is the conscious ones. Welcomed by a prepared mind, they fall on a receptive ground. Conscious visions may be symbolic representations of an ongoing psychic process, the symbols taken from the mystic's religious and cultural tradition. This is true, for instance, of Ramakrishna's vision of his "enlightenment," which he 'saw' in the traditional Yogic imagery of Kuṇḍalīni, the coiled serpent energy rising through the different centers (chakras) of his body and opening up the 'lotuses' associated with these centers, a specifically Hindu metaphor for mental transformation and the opening up of the psyche to hitherto inaccessible psychic experience. "I saw a twenty-two, twenty-three-year-old, exactly resembling me, enter the Sūkṣmā nerve and with his tongue 'sport' (ramaṇa) with the vulva (yoni) shaped lotuses. He began with the center at the anus, through the centers of the penis, navel, and so on. The respective four-petaled, and six-petaled lotuses which had been drooping, rose high and blossomed. I distinctly remember that when he came to the heart and sport with it with his tongue, a twelve-petaled lotus which had been drooping rose high and opened its petals. Then he came to the sixteen-petaled lotus in the throat and the two-petaled one in the forehead. And last of all, the thousand-petaled lotus in the head blossomed." (Gupta, *Vacanamṛta*, vol.3, 89) (Kakar, 1991:26)

This particular vision, in which self-representation is split into observing and participating aspects can also be seen through psychiatric glasses as a heurtoscopic depersonalization which occurs particularly among individuals with tendencies toward self-contemplation and introspection. Yet in the absence of any associated painful or anxious affect and the fact that this kind of vision was only one among Ramakrishna's vast repertoire of visions with very different structures and qualities, I would tend to see its ground in creativity, akin to the heightened fantasy of an artist or a writer, rather than in pathology. Goethe and Maupassant are two instances of creative writers who also experienced the phenomenon of their doubles. (J.M.R. Damas Mora et.al., "On Heurtoscopy or the Phenomenon of the Double", *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 53 (1980): 75-83) (Kakar, 1991:26)

### 4. **UNIVERSAL VISIONS:**

Other conscious visions are visual insights, images full of conviction and sudden clarity, couched either in a universal mystical or in a particular, cultural-historical idiom.

Some examples of the universal visions would be seeing the universe filled with sparks of fire, or glittering like a lake of quicksilver, or all its quarters illuminated with the light of myriad candles. Such visions of light have been reported by mystics throughout the ages, and indeed, seeing the divine light has been a central feature of many mystical cults. Another visual insight of the universal variety is seeing everything throbbing with consciousness: "Sometimes I see the world soaked with consciousness in the same way as the earth is soaked with water during the rains." (Gupta, *Vacanamṛta*, vol.1, 388) (Kakar, 1991:26-7) Thus, universal visions are found universally among mystics and hence, they cannot be termed as pathological hallucinations.



##### 5. CULTURALLY CONSTITUTED VISIONS:

The full import of the more culturally constituted visions can only be appreciated if we keep in mind that Ramakrishna was a Hindu Brahmin living at a time, the nineteenth century, and place-rural Bengal-in which the ideas of pollution and polluting substances were string, caste taboos strict. Visions dissolving religious distinctions and caste taboos, such as the ones on touching forbidden substances or taking foods from forbidden persons, were thus primarily expressed in a cultural imagery relevant to Ramakrishna's community. For instance, "Then I was shown a Muslim with a long beard who came to me with rice in an earthen plate. He fed other Muslims and also gave me some grains to eat. Mother showed me there exists only one and not two." (Gupta, *Vacanamṛta*, vol.3, 109) (Kakar, 1991:27) "Another day I saw excrement, urine, rice, vegetables, and other foods. Suddenly the soul came out of my body and, like a flame, touched everything: excrement, urine, everything was tasted. It was revealed that everything is one, that there is no difference." (Gupta, *Vacanamṛta*, vol.1, 431) (Kakar, 1991:27) Or, when on the repeated egging on by his nephew, he asked the Goddess for occult powers and saw a middle-aged prostitute come up, squat on her haunches with her back to him, and proceed to evacuate. The vision revealed that occult powers were the shit of that whore. (Kakar, 1991:27) Thus, cultural taboos and Ramakrishna's revolt or resistance against those cultural taboos, which were either inhuman or inconsistent with the ultimate unity of all things are reflected in his visions. Ramakrishna's strongly internalized conviction of the Oneness is reflected here clearly.

##### 6. VISIONS OF TRANSMUTATION OF STIMULI:

There is another class of visions, or strictly speaking, mystical illusions, since, these, rest on a transmutation of external stimuli into creations which are nearer to those of the artist. Thus the way an English boy leans against a tree is transformed into a vision of Kṛ̥ṣṇā; a prostitute walking toward him is changed into a vision of the Mother Goddess-both images irradiate his body and mind with beneficence. In Blake's words, these illusions are "auguries of innocence" enabling the mystic "to see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower." (Kakar, 1991:27-8) Thus, real mystical visions which are called illusions in the terms of psychology also do not reflect pathological, according to Kakar.

##### 7. UNCONVISIONS:

There are the indescribable, unconscious visions. Ramakrishna once said to his disciples, "you see, something goes up creeping from the feet to the head. Consciousness continues to exist as long as this power does not reach the head; but as soon as it reaches the head, all consciousness is completely lost. There is no seeing or hearing anymore, much less speaking. Who can speak? The very idea of 'I' and 'You' vanishes. While it (the serpent power) goes up, I feel a desire to tell you everything-how many visions I experience, of their nature, etc. Until it comes to this place (showing the heart) or at most this place (showing the throat) speaking is possible, and I do speak. But the moment it goes up beyond this place (showing the throat) someone forcibly presses the mouth, as it were, and I lose all consciousness. I cannot control it. Suppose I try to describe what kind of visions I experience when it goes beyond this place (showing the throat). As soon as I begin to think of them for the purpose of description, the mind rushes immediately up, and speaking becomes impossible." (Saradananda, *Śrī Ramakrishna*, vol.1, 417) (Kakar, 1991:28) Thus, ineffability which is the basic characteristic of mystical phenomena is, when applied to mystical visions, then they are termed as "unconscious visions."

##### 8. KEEPING THE TRACE OF EGO VISIONS: A SIGN OF MENTAL HEALTH:

Ramakrishna deliberately used to maintain a trace of observing ego even during absorbing vision. This capacity of maintaining "Doubling Consciousness", one experiencing the mystical vision and the other observing it-itself is the greatest sign of highest mental integration. Expressing his feelings through metaphors, Ramakrishna says, "I feel like a fish released from a pot into the water of the Ganges." Ramakrishna, however, does not seem to have been overly enamored of these states which have been so often held as the apex of the mystical experience. He consciously tried to keep a trace of the observing ego- a little spark of the big fire-so as not to completely disappear, or disappear for a long time, into the "unio mystica" with its non differentiation of 'I' and the 'Other.' As Ramakrishna says, "In samādhi, I lose outer consciousness completely, but God generally keeps a little trace of the ego in me for the enjoyment. Enjoyment is possible when 'I' and 'You' remain." Elsewhere, he also says, "I want to taste sugar, not become sugar." Thus, Ramakrishna shows highest maturity of personality development in his capacity to maintain a trace of ego even in his mystical experience. However, as Kakar says, yet, in spite of himself, he was often the salt doll that went into the ocean. (Kakar, 1991:28)

#### V. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CONCEPT OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF MASLOW AND THE CONCEPT OF SELF-REALIZATION IN RAMAKRISHNA

Ramakrishna's spiritual quest and yearning for the Love of God throughout his life underlies the highest 'Divine' motivation of self-realization. It can be compared with Maslow's concept of "self-actualized" person. In Maslow's words one can say that Ramakrishna's spiritual or mystical journey begins with "Deficiency Motivation" but it gradually culminates into "Growth Motivation" of self-actualization. But, it is very much important to note that the concept of self-actualized and the concept of self-realized are all together different concepts. The former may have been achieved by the starting feeling of "Deficiency Motivation", in the second state of consciousness can be achieved through the concept in mind the highest Ideal of human being. In Maslow's concept of self-actualization. Thus, this is the basic difference between the two.



1. Maslow believes that there are basic five needs, and after the fulfillment of first four needs, one can have the need for self-actualization. While, in Ramakrishna, the ultimate goal of human life is to realize the Ultimate Reality. Hence, in Maslow, in self-actualization, there is the actualization of self, while, in Ramakrishna, there is the realization of the Ultimate Reality.
2. In Maslow, called the 'being need' to the need of self-actualization and this 'being' means the actualization of one's potentials. While, in Ramakrishna, realization is not the actualization of one's potentials, but to know the real nature of man, which is different from the worldly human potential. Though, that potentials are there in the mystics, but the mystical phenomena is all together different from that of actualizing worldly potentials.
3. To further clarify his concept of self-actualization by examples, Maslow gave the name of persons, to whom he considers as self-actualized persons. He began by picking out a group of people, some historical figures, some people he knew, whom he felt clearly met the standard of self-actualization. Included in this august group were Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Adams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Benedict Spinoza, and Alduous Huxley, plus 12 unnamed people who were alive at the time Maslow did his research. It is to be noted that these esteemed persons may be called by Maslow the self-actualized persons, but by no means are they considered as the self-realized persons, who have got the realization of the Ultimate Reality.
4. Lastly, the most basic difference between the two can be explained in this way. As it is said that to become a self-actualized is a need of man, though very few. According to Maslow, these types of persons have the need of the higher level and that need should be fulfilled by them, in order to be happy. To differentiate the need of self-actualization from the 'instinctive needs', Maslow called it 'Metaneeds' and simultaneously says that if that needs are not fulfilled, then the person will suffer "Matopathologies". Dr. C. George Boeree has nicely explained this in the following way:

G. Boeree says that according to Maslow, when a self-actualizer doesn't get these needs fulfilled, they respond with 'metopathologies' -- a list of problems as long as the list of 'metaneeds'! He says, "Let me summarize it by saying that, when forced to live without these values, the self-actualizer develops depression, despair, disgust, alienation, and a degree of cynicism." With reference to these needs of self-actualized person, it should be noted that these qualities are very much present in the life of a realized person or mystic, but these behaviour are very natural to him and they are not as need to be fulfilled.

In fact, after some time, Maslow has devoted his attention not to his own theory, but to the humanistic psychology and human potentials movement. Narrating Maslow's last thinking, Boereen says that toward the end of his life, he inaugurated what he called the fourth force in psychology: Freudian and other 'depth' psychologies constituted the first force; Behaviorism was the second force; His own humanism, including the European existentialists, were the third force. The fourth force was the "transpersonal psychologies" which, taking their cue from Eastern philosophies, investigated such things as meditation, higher levels of consciousness, and even parapsychological phenomena. It is important to note that as it is seen earlier that Ramakrishna do not believe in any occult powers which are considered sometimes as parapsychological phenomena. Then, we can say that Ramakrishna's mysticism is even beyond the "forth force" mentioned by Maslow.

## VI. JEFFERY J. KRIPAL'S CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FROM PSYCHOANALYTIC POINT-OF-VIEW AND IT'S ANSWERS

Jeffery J. Kripal, in his most controversial book, "Kṛiṣṇa's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna" has made very critical remarks about Ramakrishna's mystical behaviour. His comments are found to be so much baseless and meaningless. Because, it seems that many remarks reflected through ignorance of mysticism, spirituality and Eastern culture in general and Indian culture in particular. It is believed that many Bengali words are literally non-sensibly interpreted which the word actually does not mean at all. Here, some of the criticisms by Kripal are stated and discussed in the light of answers given by Somnath Bhattacharya, a professor and scholar in Psychology. The whole discussion is made in the following titles which are taken from Prof. Bhattacharya's writing. They are as under:

### 1. SEXUAL ABUSE:

Kripal insists that village people must have abused Ramakrishna presumably because he had states of absorption right from his childhood. But Ramakrishna's own descriptions of his childhood suggest quite the contrary, e.g. "During my younger days the men and women of Kṛimṛpukur were equally fond of me. No one distrusted me. Everybody took me in as one of the family." (GSR 239-240; KA 5.45)

He cites a bedroom scene with Mathur and his wife to suggest Ramakrishna's abuse by Mathur. Ramakrishna's memory of this is far from being anything suggestive of abuse. "I used to sleep in the same room with Mathur and his wife. They took care of me as if I were their own child." (GSR 390; KA 4.72) Moreover his recollections about Mathur's devoted service for fourteen years, with unflinching eagerness to meet his necessities and demands, are all very positive and happy. Having been taken to a brothel against one's will can be termed as abusive by Kripal; but Ramakrishna was an adult -- with an independent and often willful thinking -- who was taken to the brothel only without his knowledge and not by force.

Moreover, even if his samḍhi in this situation is taken to be a dissociative trance is in no way explains his going into samḍhi, scores of times every day, under happy and non-threatening conditions, and emergence there from with profound insights.

### 2. FEMININE IDENTITY:

It is easy to talk loosely with Masson about Ramakrishna's transvestite activities, but dressing up in a feminine dress as a part of a legitimate and culturally accepted sḍhanḍ for a short period of time does not amount to transvestism. Ramakrishna after all also dressed like a ḍikṭa and a VaiḌava during his ākti and VaiḌava sḍhanḍ days and like a Muslim during his Islam sḍhanḍ -- and



these were male attires -- only to try and make his identification with these cults complete (GM 299). Moreover, contrary to Kripal's thesis, most transvestites are heterosexual here. (DSM-IV).

### 3. *TRANS-SEXUALITY:*

Further, suggestions about his secondary trans-sexuality (KC xxi) are also all too facile. The American Psychiatric Association (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV) defines trans-sexuality as strong and persistent cross-gender identification, and not merely a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex. It is a disorder always involving distress to the person, with a feeling of estrangement from the body and a felt need to alter the appearance of the body. If Ramakrishna sometimes talked about his femininity he was also clear about what he meant by it - "Formerly I too used to see many visions, but now in my ecstatic state I don't see so many. I am gradually getting over my feminine nature; I feel nowadays more like a man. Therefore I control my emotions; I don't manifest it outwardly so much. The younger Naren has the nature of a man. Therefore in meditation his mind completely merges in the Ideal. He does not show emotion. Nityagopal has a feminine nature. Therefore while he is in a spiritual mood his body becomes distorted and twisted; it becomes flushed." (GSR 798; KA 4.214)

In the Kathjmrta when M. finds Ramakrishna pacing like a lion (KA 1.36, GSR 92), when we find him displaying "leonine strength" at dance (GM 801), or engaging in persuasive conversation with well known intellectuals, scholars, and social leaders of his days like Keshab Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, KÅ, adas Pal and Iswarachandra Vidyasagar, asserting his will vis-a-vis his teachers (like the Bhairavi and Tota Puri), preaching to varied audiences and closely guiding his disciples, we are actually witnessing what would be classified as a masculine role not only in the then Bengal, but also in the present day USA. In the Kathjmrta and related texts, in fact, we also find Ramakrishna playing multiple roles across genders and ages with élan. Women could evidently relate to him as one of their own group (GM 394-98) as much as young boys and elderly men. This is especially significant at a time when social identities were largely compartmentalized. Psychologically speaking, all humans have the potential for dual gender identification (social influences play a major role in defining our gender stereotypes), and Ramakrishna clearly had both these aspects well developed and harmonized. Unfortunately, to carry through this thesis of feminine identification Kripal resorts to erroneous documentation. Thus a whole section is devoted to bhjgavatamir tanu or goddess body that Ramakrishna is supposed to have possessed.

The actual Kathjmrta term however is bhjgavati tanu which simply means divine body, and has no engendered connotation. (The term is actually a Sanskrit term, and grammatical and physiological genders don't always go together in Sanskrit. E.g., the term 'djrj', meaning wife, is masculine). Bhjgavatamir and Bhjgavati are two different words, and a person who reads the one for the other only reveals his lack of knowledge for that language. It is this typical ignorance of Kripal which disqualifies him totally to comment a single word on mystical experiences, mystical traditions and especially on the greatest mystic of modern age like, Ramakrishna.

Besides, Ramakrishna specifically identifies this bhjgavati tanu with the causal body, "by means of which one enjoys the bliss of God and holds communion with him", and notes its distinction from the gross physical body and the subtle body (or the mental complex) [GSR 902; KA 1.250]. To assign a physical or even psychological sex to this category then is a reductive strategy, which robs the analyst of the possibility of deeper insight into human nature and its possibilities. Similarly, Ramakrishna's wearing silken clothes (garader kapar) during p£j (GSR 544; KA 4.175) is taken to mean feminine dress (KC 92, 103-4) simply because Kripal doesn't know that male priests in Bengal routinely wear silken clothes.

### 4. *HOMOEROTICISM AND MISOGYNY:*

To take Ramakrishna's talk about his care, eager concern, and longing for his young male disciples or his affectionately feeding and touching them as evidence of homosexuality or even homoeroticism again suggests a misconceived line of thinking. For that matter, every father's touching and caressing his son is homoerotic at a dynamic interpretative level, but psychoanalysts know better than that. Moreover, the fact that an Indian guru should be concerned and caring toward his disciples and devotees is the norm rather than exception, and no conflict is known to accompany such behaviour (see also Roland, 1997). It is worth remembering that the Kathjmrta is a male dominated record simply because its recorder was a male and the social segregation of men and women in nineteenth century Bengal made it nearly impossible for him to be present during Ramakrishna's meetings with the women devotees. We thus often find Ramakrishna being taken to the inner quarters of the devotees' houses but no record of the conversations that transpire there. But what do we notice about Ramakrishna's behaviour on the few occasions that women actually appear on the Kathjmrta scene -- we find him playing with a small girl and singing for her (GSR 490; KA 4.105), tenderly asking ladies to refrain from fasting while visiting him and offering them food (GSR 432; KA 5.122), making anxious enquiries about and arranging to console a bereaved mother (GSR 973-4; KA 2.243) and visiting a bereaved widow's house -- also to console her (GSR 822-4; KA 3.206-8). He even tenderly asks his disciples to refrain from driving out the mad woman with a lover's attitude towards him (an attitude which Kripal is confident Ramakrishna hated) (GSR 952; KA 3.263).

Numerous other records of his interactions with his women disciples of all ages and classes (which are studiously ignored by Kripal) reveal his dealings with them to be as affectionate and close as were his dealings with his male disciples. It is all too easy to play around with the word kaminç and say that Ramakrishna hated women (or for that matter women as lovers) and that when he spoke of sexual abstinence he only had heterosexuality in mind. Here also Kripal's utter ignorance of spiritual path is revealed. In all the world religions, be it Christianity or Jainism or Hinduism, it is universally accepted fact that the seekers are advices for sexual abstinence very strictly. This point simply cannot be criticized even from the repressive nature as Freud did, as it is not repressive, but here it is all sublimation. Then, there is no question of its criticism from homo or heterosexuality point-of-view.





As a matter of fact, in the *Kathimṛta* we find Ramakrishna repeatedly talking about *indriya sukha* (sense pleasures), *dehasukha* (bodily pleasures), *viĀayasukha* (object gratification), *kṛma* (lust in general), and *bhoga* (enjoyment) as impediments to spiritual growth. All these terms stand for the pleasure principle and are indicative of the erotic in a much broader (Freudian) sense than just heterosexuality. Of course, we don't have any specific comment from Ramakrishna about homosexuality simply because homosexuality as a construct was not current in Bengal of Ramakrishna's times. Ramakrishna's lifelong love and devotion for the Goddess *Kṛṣṇā* also clearly does not fit into Kripal's homoerotic thesis. So, he must somehow include a castration story to get over this problem (and that would make things appear more 'psychoanalytical' too!).

#### 5. *SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AGAINST KRIPAL:*

The available empirical evidence also does not support Kripal's agenda.

##### i. *Andrew Greely:*

In Kripal's own backyard, sociologist Andrew Greely of University of Chicago's National Opinions Research Council (NORC) tested people who had profoundly mystical experiences, such as being bathed in white light. When these persons were subjected to standard tests measuring psychological well being, the mystics scored at the University of Chicago psychologist Norman Bradburn, who developed the test, said that no other factor had ever been found to correlate so highly with psychological balance as did mystical experience. (Greely 7-9)

##### ii. *Greely and William McReady:*

In a landmark US national poll reported in the *New York Times Magazine* of Jan 16, 1975, Greely and William McReady found that people with mystical experiences had happy and positive recollections of their childhood. Also, even the small group of subjects who reported mystical events occasioned by orgasm (the sample was from the general population and did not specifically study celibates or people with formal spiritual persuasions) found the spiritual experience to be categorically different from orgasmic pleasure and much more powerful.

##### iii. *Walsh and Vaudhan:*

In an important study on the psychological effects of meditation, using subjects at various stages of Buddhist enlightenment the following results were reported:

Interestingly, the initially enlightened subjects displayed evidence of normal conflicts around issues such as dependency, sexuality, and aggression. However, they showed remarkably little defensiveness and reactivity to these conflicts. In other words, they accepted and were unperturbed by their neuroses. Those few meditators at the third stage of enlightenment gave reports that were unique... they showed no evidence of drive conflicts and appeared free of psychological conflicts usually considered an inescapable part of human existence. This finding is consistent with classic claims that psychological suffering can be dramatically reduced in advanced stages of meditation. (Walsh and Vaughan 61-62). Incidentally, Ramakrishna's *saṃjḍhi* states were accompanied by very profound inward withdrawal of consciousness, and remarkable physiological changes, consistent with the highest stages of meditative absorption as documented in Hindu Tantra and Yoga as well as Buddhist literature. Thus the famous physician Mahendarlal Sarkar himself examined and found Ramakrishna without heartbeat and corneal reflexes during *saṃjḍhi*. (GM-801) These physiological changes (clinically taken as signs of death) ...and these were not metaphorical changes...are not known to occur in a dissociative trance.

##### iv. *Medard Boss:*

Medard Boss, the influential Swiss existential psychotherapist, who was analyzed by Sigmund Freud and had trained with such prominent psychoanalysts as Bleuler, Ernest Jones, Karen Horney, Otto Fenichel, Hans Sachs and Wilhelm Reich, had this to say about the holy men he met on his lecture-visit to India: there were the exalted figures of the sages and holy men themselves, each one of them a living example of the possibility of human growth and maturity and of the attainment of an imperturbable inner peace, a joyous freedom from guilt, and a purified, selfless goodness and calmness.... No matter how carefully I observe the waking lives of the holy men, no matter how ready they were to tell me about their dreams, I could not detect in the best of them a trace of a selfish action or any kind of a repressed or consciously concealed shadow life. (Boss 187-88)

##### v. *Katchadourian and Lunde:*

It is worth noting that although we commonly speak of a sex drive, sex does not fit the usual conception of drive as a felt need that gets stronger and stronger until it is satisfied. Indeed sexual abstinence probably decreases sexual motivation over the long run (Masters and Johnson). Also there is no evidence that, despite myths to the contrary, abstinence from sexual activity is detrimental to a person's health (Katchadourian and Lunde) Kripal translates the term *mṛṭṛbhṛva* as attitude of the mother and (as we see next) quickly advances to draw sexual connotations. In actual fact Ramakrishna himself defines *mṛṭṛ-bhṛva* as "the attitude of the Child toward God" on the part of the aspirant "O God, Thou art my Mother and I am thy child" (GSR 701; KA 5.141).

Kripal is convinced that this passage has a "same sex-structure" and talks about "a human male taking on a feminine identity in order to erotically engage a male deity or disciple". He conveniently forgets that the basic structure of the metaphor is heterosexual; Ramakrishna never says that this practice is applicable only to men [in fact the *Kathimṛta* records in detail how Ramakrishna advises two young ladies in the worship of Siva (GSR 431-432; KA 5.121-2), and the 'state of the Child' in Ramakrishna's discourse lacks engendered connotations. Moreover, the entire metaphor is to illustrate the abstract love for *Satcidānanda*, a gender neutral entity.



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