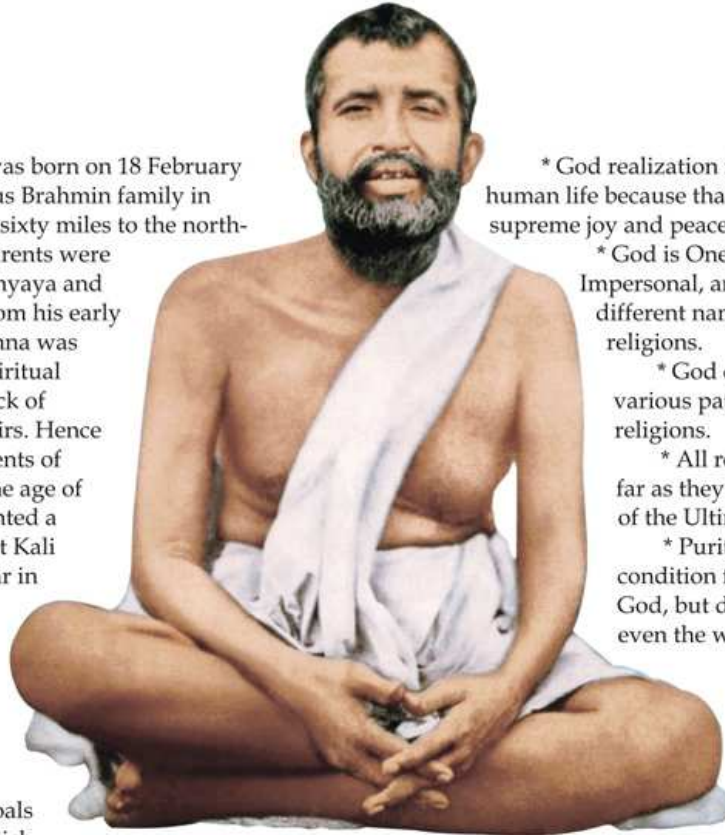


SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Ramakrishna was born on 18 February 1836 in a poor and pious Brahmin family in Kamarpukur, a village sixty miles to the north-west of Kolkata. His parents were Kshudiram Chattopadhyaya and Chandramani Devi. From his early boyhood Sri Ramakrishna was devoted to God and spiritual matters and showed lack of interest in worldly affairs. Hence he had only the rudiments of formal education. At the age of nineteen he was appointed a priest at the newly built Kali temple at Dakshineswar in Kolkata. From then on for another eleven years he remained absorbed in the practice of various spiritual disciplines of Hinduism. After attaining the highest goals of these disciplines, which included the experience of Advaita or non-dual state of consciousness, he turned to the spiritual paths of Islam and Christianity. These paths led him finally to the same ultimate Reality, which he had earlier attained through the spiritual paths of Hinduism. From all these experiences Sri Ramakrishna came to the following conclusions regarding Reality and religious life.



* God realization is the ultimate goal of human life because that alone can bring man supreme joy and peace.

* God is One, Personal as well as Impersonal, and is known by different names in different religions.

* God can be realized through various paths taught in world religions.

* All religions are true in so far as they lead to the realization of the Ultimate Truth.

* Purity of mind is a basic condition for the realization of God, but divine grace can redeem even the worst sinner.

* With this faith in God one should cultivate a positive outlook on life instead of yielding to self-condemnation.

* God dwells in all people as the Supreme Self; hence all people are to be treated with respect.

Although Sri Ramakrishna had been ordained a monk, he lived like an ordinary person, and hardly ever left the precincts of the Kali temple where he was given a room to stay. The fame of his holiness began to spread, and disciples, mostly belonging to the educated middle class in Kolkata, began to gather around him. He trained some of his young disciples to become monks.

The foremost among them was Swami Vivekananda.

Sri Ramakrishna passed away on 16 August 1886 at the age of fifty years.

Dakshineswar
Kali Temple

Sri Ramakrishna
in his birth place,
Kamarpukur

