



CHICAGO VEDANTA SOCIETY

A Spiritual & Cultural
Quarterly eZine of
Vivekananda Vedanta Society
of Chicago



No. 10, 2016

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The thought of Phalaharini Kali came in my mind because June 4th is Phalaharini Kali Puja night and our this issue of "Chicago Calling" will be published on June 3rd.

Phalaharini Kali puja is a very important event for the Hindus. Hinduism believe in "karma phala" (Action & its result) theory. Hindus believe that on this night if one can properly and sincerely worship Goddess Kali, the divine power of the almighty God, the result of one's work, past & present will be taken away by the divine mother, Kali.

The word "Phala-harini" means – "Phala" or results of actions and "Harini" takes away (by the goddess). The Goddess who takes away the fruits of our actions is "Phala-harini" Kali. One's free from the result off all actions, a Jiva, a human being is free from the bondage of rebirth circle-circle of birth and death.

In the modern age, Bhagavan Sri Rama Krishna propitiated the divine power of Phalaharini kali in

the person of mother Sarada Devi.

The students of Sri Ramakrishna-Ma Saradas' biographies know that Sri Ramakrishna Dev on many occasions indicated, some times in very clear terms that Sarada Devi is none other than Kali herself. We can recall one famous incident: one day while Mother was with Sri Ramakrishna she asked, "How do you look upon me?" Sri Ramakrishna's immediate reply – "The same mother how is in the temple (Kali), the same mother who gave birth to this body and is now living in the *nahabat* (Ramakrishna's biological mother used to live in the music room of the Dakshineswar temple), the same mother is now rubbing my feet. Truly, I always see you as a form of the blissful Divine Mother".

It was for the people of the modern age, skeptical and unaware of the divine nature of the soul, engrossed in physical comforts, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Dev worshipped Divine Mother as "Shodashi" on the Phalaharini Kali Puja night on May 25th, 1873 at Dakshineswar.

Invoking the divine power in Ma Sarada, Sri Ramakrishna prayed- "O Divine Mother Tripura-Sundari ! O eternal virgin, possessor of all power! Please open the gate of perfection. Purify her body and mind, and manifest Yourself through her for the welfare of all".

The life of Mother Sarada is the living example of the manifestation of the divine grace through the person of mother- the living spirituality.

Every moment, every day of her life was spent for the welfare of humanity. Her unselfish all embracing love knew no boundary. She is Phalaharini Kali, she will remove all misery and suffering if only one can call her with sincere heart as mother.

Glory to Divine Mother! Jay Ma Sarada!

HELP, ASSIMILATION & HARMONY FROM VAISHNAVA POINT OF VIEW

SWAMI PRAPANNANANDA

Minister, Vedanta Society of Sacramento

This lecture was delivered on Nov. 10th, 2013
at “Chicago Calling”.



Respected Swami Suhitanandaji, respected Swami Chetananandaji, other respected Swamis, brother monks, sister nuns and dear devotees. My subject is Help Assimilation and Harmony from Vaishnava Point of view and to the spirit of Vaishnava I assure you that I shall not test your patience. Vaishnavism is an important branch of Hinduism, its root can be traced in the earliest scriptures of this religion; the Vedas. Through the centuries it spread extensively in spiritual depths and enormous following throughout the length and breadth of India. It fulfils the spiritual hunger of a vast majority of people, this fact is evident from the large number of Vaishnava temples and festivals. It was nourished by a large number of outstanding mystics and saints from different regions of India.

Lord Vishnu is one of the three aspects of Hindu trinity, he is entrusted with the sustenance of the cosmos, and he is also equated to the sun God in some places. Without any doubt he is one the most popular aspect of God and he is widely worshipped. Narayana is another name by which he is addressed in many places of the Vedic literature in the epics and the Puranas too. He is highly eulogized and in many places is given the stratus of the supreme spirit. Vaishnavism is also called Bhagavata Dharma or the religion of the Bhagavatas, the worshipers of the Bhagavata. Being the deity entrusted with the charge of preservation of the created world, he is often required to take birth as a mortal being known as avatar or incarnation. Possibilities of incarnations are limitless but most prominent ones are counted

to be ten. Sri Krishna is considered to be the eighth incarnation of lord Vishnu, but gradually Sri Krishna was elevated to the position of Lord Vishnu himself. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna said to his disciple Arjuna सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुच - *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śharaṇaṁ vraja ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣhayiṣhyāmi mā śhuchaḥ* “abandon all actions good or bad and take refuge in me, I shall deliver you from all sins; do not grieve.” In ancient Vaishnavism supreme Lord Vishnu was advocated with chief practice for reaching the highest goal of spiritual life that is moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Different ways of reaching the goal of life were preached by different acharyas or teachers. In the process, different sects and sub-sects were born in Vaishnavism. The prominent teachers were the Alvars, Ramanuja, Madhva and Nimbarka in the southern part of India. Ramananda, Kabirdas, Vallabha and Sri Chaitanya in the north. Mention also must be made to saint signers Tulsidas, Tyagaraja, Jnaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Surdas, Mirabai and Narsinh Mehta. The devotional songs of the saint singers along with a host of others made Vaishnavism a very simple religion and also truly practical for common people. Swami Vivekananda’s passionate words at the concluding of the parliament of religion; help and not fight assimilate and not destruction harmony and peace and not dissention are reflected in many songs and poems which were spread by Vaishnava saints and singers. I would like to share a few of them with you.

Mahatma Gandhi the prophet of non-violence and patriot of India was born and brought up in a Vaishnava family. He was an admirer of Swami Vivekananda and drew inspiration from him. Gandhiji loved one song which was composed by well-known Gujarati saint singer Narsinh Mehta. It describes the qualities of a follower of Vaishnavism. The song is this, *Vaishnav jan to tene kahiye je peed paraayi jaane re*, "One is known as a Vaishnava that means one who is a devotee of Vishnu who feels the pain of others." *par dukhkhe upkaar kare toye Man abhimaan na aane re* -- "Does good to others especially to those ones who are in suffering; never allows conceit to enter his mind." -- *sakal; lok maan sahune vande nindaa na kare keni re*, "A Vaishnava tolerates and respects the entire world; does not censure or belittle anyone." -- *vaach kaachh man nishchal raakhe dhan-dhan janani teni re*, "Keeps his or her words actions and thoughts pure; O Vaishnava your mother is blessed." *sam drishti ne trishna tyagi par-stree jene maat re*, "A Vaishnava sees all equally; renounces greed and avarice; considers another's wife or daughter as his mother." -- *jivha thaki asatya na bole Par dhan nav jhaalee haath re*, "Will never utter false words with his or tongue; does not even touch someone else's property." -- *moh maya vyaape nahi jene dridh vairaagya jena man maan re*, "A Vaishnava does not succumb to worldly attachments; who has devoted himself to staunch detachment of worldly pleasures." -- *Ram naam shoon taali laagi sakal tirath tena tan maan re*, "Who has been addicted to the elicited name of Rama; for whom all holy pilgrimages are in his own body." *Van-lobhi ne kapat-rahit chhe kaam-krodh nivaarya re*, "Who has no greed and deceit; who has renounced lust and anger." -- *Bhane narsaiyyo tenun darshan kartakul ekoter taarya re*, "The poet Narsinh will like to see such a person by whose virtue the one's entire lineage gets salvation." Similarly in the eastern part of India Sri Chaitanya, a great Vaishnava a saint singer preached through loud carol songs peace and harmony along with devotion to God. In

one of his very few compositions he addresses (तृणादपि सुनीचेन तरोरपि सहिष्णुना अमानिना मानदेन कीर्तनीयः सदा हरिः - *trinaadapi sunicena, taror api sahishnuna amaanina maanadena, kirtaniya sadaa Hari* "O my mind, be humbler than a blade of grass; be patience and forbearing like the tree. Take no honor to thy self, give honor to all; chant the name of the Lord."

Finally, I would to close my talk by referring to a song a tribute the great poet saint Goswami Tulsidas; the composer of Ramcharitmanas (श्रीरामचरितमानस). Regarding this book a famous Muslim poet Abdul Rahim Khan-I-Khana who was the poet laureate of the Mughal king Akbar has said "Ramcharitmanas vimala santa jeevana prana, hinduwan ko veda sama jabanahi prakat Quran - The immaculate Ramcharitmanas is the breath of the life of saints, it is similar to the Vedas of the Hindus and it is similar the Quran manifest for the musalmans." Mahatma Gandhi adapted one song attributed to saint Tulsidas and used for his congregational singing. The song is called Ram Dhun, "Chief of the house of Raghu, Lord Rama, uplifters of those who have fallen, Sita and Rama, God and Allah are your names, bless everyone with a real wisdom; O Lord." रघुपति राघव राजाराम, पतित पावन सीताराम, ईश्वर अल्लाह तेरो नाम, सब को सन्मति दे भगवान - *raghupati rāghav rājārām, patit pāvan sītārām, īśvar allāh tero nām, sab ko sanmati de bhagavān*.

Thank you very much.



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO IMPLEMENT IT

SWAMI TATTWAMAYANANDA

Minister, Vedanta Society of Northern California

This lecture was delivered on Nov. 9th, 2013 at "Chicago Calling"



My pranams to revered General Secretary Maharaj, revered ChetananandaJi Maharaj and all other senior Monks, Nuns, Sannyasinis, admirers and devotees of Swami Vivekananda.

My topic is the philosophy of Vivekananda and how we can implement it, in this modern age. The entire philosophical teachings of Swami Vivekananda, not only philosophical ideas but also his ideas on education, his ideas on national reconstruction, his concept of an ideal society, his ideas of nation-building, all these were based on one core principle: "The unity of all existence", the fact is that humanity is one single spiritual family, not only humanity, but the whole creation. The one supreme consciousness is the immanent principle residing in all beings and that is also the omnipresent, all-pervading principle and the ultimate transcendental reality. As we realize this reality within us, we also recognize its omnipresent nature; so as we enjoy peace and harmony within; and we become better human beings, we can look upon entire humanity as one spiritual family. This idea he termed as universal spiritual humanism. That is the term used by many scholars. Research scholars have written theses on Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of Universal Spiritual Humanism. By expounding Vedanta as universal spiritual humanism Swamiji brought about a silent revolution in the landscape of 19th century religious thought at a time when

the followers of Karl Marx and Darwin attacking religion as anti-humanistic and in conflict with modern Science.

Humanism as a philosophical concept has a long history. Though the term humanism became well known in the 19th century traces of the idea of looking upon the human being and human welfare as the centre of speculative thought can be found in the Rg-Veda Samhita, in the teachings of the Buddha, in the Gathas of Zarathushtra, in the teachings of Lao Tzu and in the teachings of Greek philosophers like Thales and Anaxagoras. Later Augustine and in our own times radical humanists and secular humanists have focused on human needs above everything else. But Swamiji maintained that humanism has a spiritual dimension. This spiritual ideal at the practical level works in the form of synthesis and harmony. He says, "What we need today is the harmonious blending of the best elements of the occidental and the oriental, the scientific and the religious, the spiritual and the rational, faith and reason". A spiritual humanist looks upon selfless service to his fellow beings as the greatest form of worshipping God. He respects and accepts all religions. Because each one is a path leading to God and one's own self-realization. This is an ideal for the complete man; this is an ideal for the modern age, a complete spiritual ideal that represents a radical paradigm change in the history of religious thought.

In fact, right from the day Swamiji delivered his famous Chicago lecture till our own times, if you observe the gradual evolution in religious history and religious thought, you can find an evolution, a growth from a more and more conservative outlook to a more and more broadminded, universal approach. I believe the two important areas in which Swamiji's philosophy can be implemented are the areas of interreligious relationship and education.

If you look at the history of the concept of interreligious relationship from earlier days till the time Swamiji appeared on the scene, many people in the western world use to think that their own religion is the only path and all other religions are wrong. This approach is called religious exclusivism. Today, however, you find people belonging to different religious denominations coming together on a single platform. In fact, Pope John XXIII who was responsible for a radical change in the Vatican's approach to other faith systems, and who was, in fact, instrumental in evolving a new approach in Christianity's relationship with other religions concept of, made a very important statement in his document. That was probably in 1962. The Second Vatican Council's recognition that "the seeds of truth and even God's presence could be seen at work in other religions" was a turning point in the history of inter-religious relationship in modern times. But, almost 6000 thousand years earlier the Vedic seers had declared: "Truth is One; Sages call it by different names". It was Swami Vivekananda who introduced this great religious teaching to the west in 1993 during the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Today no enlightened preacher will dare to address an educated or enlightened audience and make a declaration that his religion is the only path and all other religions are wrong. At least, these days, they won't do it as often as they used to do it in the past. So, there is a gradual opening

up in the outlook of religious organizations.

Swamiji made another radical contribution which is very relevant today. Swamiji said "Spirituality goes beyond the prison walls of God, a Holy book, a set of rituals and a place of worship". In fact, most of the criticisms that religion had to encounter in the 19th century, i.e. the age in which Swami Vivekananda was born and worked, came from positivists, socialists, humanists, and also the followers of Darwin; the evolutionists held that the biblical concept of creation is totally contrary to the discoveries of modern science. Positivists maintained that any religion which confines itself within the prison walls of faith in a transcendental moral authority, who creates this world, stands apart, and dominates the world, a religion that divides mankind into believers and non-believers, promising heaven to believers and terrifying non-believers with hell and eternal damnation has no place in modern man's life. Swamiji said "Religion is the manifestation of divinity already in man." A much more important definition of religion is "spirituality". Spirituality goes even beyond the idea of God. Swamiji and in fact his great guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa were embodiments of belief in God but their spiritual ideas go beyond the traditional God-centered concepts of religion. According to Swami Vivekananda, Buddha was one of the greatest spiritual personalities the world has produced. Buddha did not affirm his faith in a creator God and still he was spiritual. So spirituality goes beyond religion. Today you find there are many atheists and humanists who will agree with you if you tell them that we need spirituality, but they will tell you, they don't need a God, or a religion. But Swamiji offers a new religious idea, a religious concept that goes beyond the accepted conventional definitions of religion which confines itself into narrow prison cells surrounded by certain external rituals and faith systems.

Now, if we can present this universal spiritual humanism before the broad world, I believe modern world will accept this view because it opens its doors and windows even to non-believers. Even people who do not believe in religion or God Can be spiritual. As I said Buddha, Vardhamana Mahavira, the founder of Jaina religion were two of the greatest spiritual personalities the world has produced. In fact, this is the most radical definition which Swamiji gave: "Spirituality is something which accommodates religion, which accommodates God but goes beyond belief, beyond a God-centered religious philosophy."

This is a very important contribution; this idea occurred to me whenever I had to encounter students coming from Catholic religious institutions, Presbyterian religious institutions and even when I had to interact with the student community in the University of Northern Texas and Stanford. In fact, they were asking questions about spirituality and if you tell them that spirituality is something universal which accommodates all religions but goes beyond their outer shells like rituals and mythologies there is a great appreciation. This paradigm change is Swami Vivekananda's contribution to religious thought.

Another very important effect of Swami Vivekananda's contribution that we can implement in today's world is his ideal of education. This has a great relevance in western countries. If we talk to them about religion immediately they are reminded of the crusades, the inquisitions, the 30 years war, and then casteism, untouchability and the terrible things happening all over the world in the name of God and religion. But spirituality is different; spirituality is harmonizing; it is synthesizing; it looks upon entire humanity as one spiritual family. A person who really understands this concept of spiritual oneness of creation can never quarrel with anyone, can never hurt anyone because the whole humanity is one spiritual

family. There is a great verse in the Mandukya Karika. This morning Yogatmanandaji was referring to an important point. Swami Vivekananda said again and again "I preached nothing but the Upanishads". Swamiji was the great exponent of the ancient, age old Vedic wisdom. Mandukya Karika is a metrical commentary on Mandukya Upanishad, a very short book. Kārikā, verse 3.17

स्वसिद्धान्तव्यवस्थासु द्वैतिनो निश्चिता दृढम् ।

परस्परं विरुध्यन्ते तैरयं न विरुध्यते ॥ १७ ॥

*svasiddhāntavyavasthāsu dvaitino niścītā dṛḍham ।
parasparam virudhyante tairayaṁ na virudhyate ॥ 17*

One could view Swami Vivekananda's universal humanism as the most precise and philosophical interpretation of this verse. The verse says "The dualists who believe that their own path is the only right path and all others are wrong, they fight among themselves. They cling to the conclusions of their own enquiries. But those who believe that all different paths are different approaches, different attitudes, different roads, leading to the same spiritual destination, the Advaitins, cannot injure anyone." They cannot hurt anyone, because by hurting others they are hurting themselves. In Swami Vivekananda's words "The manifestation of divinity already in man". This is the spiritual dimension of Swami Vivekananda's radical contribution to religious thought which has a great educational significance. This idea is the foundation of the highest and the most sublime ethical philosophy that we can conceive of. I said at the beginning that in the 19th century with the emergence of Marx and Engels and with the popularity of Das Kapital and Communist Manifesto a large number of modern humanists began to challenge the exclusivity claims of established religions. Positivists began to declare that a religion which cannot establish a scientific validity in the laboratory of modern science has no place in modern man's thoughts.

And again, modern humanists began to declare the religion doesn't take care of the affairs of the common man in this age. But Swamiji said true religion is spirituality and true religion defined as spirituality becomes a great spiritual ethical philosophy. The infinite oneness of the soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, all ethics and all good actions. I would say even Karl Marx or Engels or Lenin or even our own Christopher Hitchens who passed away the other day would have agreed with Swami Vivekananda.

Because Swami Vivekananda expounded a true spiritual philosophy for our times and our age which nobody can deny. If we can propagate this spiritual dimension of ethics and religious philosophy in our education institutions, and especially emphasizing the dialogical approach which is becoming more and more relevant and popular, we will be able to make educated people understand the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy. There are three main approaches in the interreligious relationship. One is the exclusivist approach which, as I said earlier, is a type of fundamentalist fanatical approach. The second one is the syncretic approach which is a kind of elitism without any serious understanding of other people's religious thoughts, only an attempted reconciliation of different and often

contradictory teachings of various religions. It becomes an artificial mingling together of conflicting religious ideas belonging to different religious persuasions. Both of these approaches are unscientific. But Swamiji's concept was different. He declared that the true foundation of interreligious relationship should be spirituality; it's called the dialogical approach. This view has become very popular now. But its roots go back to Swami Vivekananda's exposition of Vedanta in the Chicago Parliament of religion in 1893. It accepts the essential spiritual principles, the fundamental, universal core teachings of all the great religious traditions of the world. It is the essence of Swamiji's idea of universal religion and practical Vedanta. If we can accept, synthesize and harmonize the spiritual essence of different religious traditions and project this as a unifying thread for the whole humanity then we can find many common factors among conflicting cultures and civilizations. Swami Vivekananda wanted harmony and synthesis in all areas- in cultural, religious, and spiritual levels. If we can project this idea of universal spiritual humanism we will be able to make a great contribution towards popularizing Swamiji's philosophy.

Thank you. Namaskar.

Desire God and You Shall Have God

Of course you must understand, there is a difference between desire and desire. The master said, "My child, if you desire after God, God shall come to you." The disciple did not understand his master fully. One day both went to bathe in a river, and the master said, "Plunge in", and the boy did so. In a moment the master was upon him, holding him down. He would not let the boy come up. When the boy struggled and was exhausted, he let him go. "Yes, my child, how did you feel there;" "Oh, the desire for a breath of air!" "Do you have that kind of desire for God?" "No, sir." "Have that kind of desire for God and you shall have God."

Swami Vivekananda

[Notes from a lecture 'Sadhanas or preparations for higher life']

TO SEE POTENTIAL DIVINITY IN EACH SOUL

In Holy Mother's house there was a pet parrot named Gangaram. Everyday the Mother gave it a bath, cleaned its cage, and gave it food and water. Every morning and evening, the Mother said to the bird: "My child, Gangaram, now repeat your mantra." The parrot would then call out, "Hare Krishna, Hare Rama; Krishna, Krishna, Rama Rama". The Mother had taught it to chant God's names. It also learned from the Mother the names of the brahmacharins and



could utter clearly. Sometimes it called, "Ma, O Ma!", and Mother

responded, "Coming, my child, I am coming." She would carry some gram and water for the bird, as she knew that the bird's call meant that it was hungry....

On another day she took some food from the offering plate and gave it to Gangaram. Swami Parameswarananda protested: "Mother, what are you doing? The *naivedya* has not yet been offered to the Master, and you have given some to Gangaram."

She replied: "It is alright, my son. The Master dwells in the bird."

Excerpts from: *Sri Sarada Devi & Her Divine Play* By Swami Chetanananda

*dva suparna sayuja sakhaya
samanam vriksham parishasvajate,
taylor anyah pippalam svadv atty anashnann anyo
abhicakashiti.*

On one same tree, two birds are perched, associated as a pair. Of these, one eats and tastes the fruit. The other of the pair is that which does not eat, but just looks on. (*Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.1*)



Story of Great Bird Jatayu:

A Puranic Reference

In the Epic Ramayana when Jatayu saw Ravana abducting Sita, he tried to rescue Sita from Ravana. Jatayu fought valiantly with Ravana, but he was very old. While Jatayu was wounded and was lying on the ground Lord Rama arrived. Lord Rama sensed the end result and granted him *moksha*.

An Excerpt from: *A Portrait of Sri Ramakrishna*
[The English translation of the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna-Punthi* by
Akshay Kumar Sen, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna]

One day, the master was seated under a banyan tree. He saw two birds sitting on one branch. One was calm and unperturbed the other was restless and, according to its mood constantly flying around here and there. Now and then, it would gaze at the calm one. Seeing this the calm one opened its mouth and the other one entered. The Master saw it and was startled and started thinking about what that phenomenon signified. The idea of the *Atman* and the *Paramatman* dawned on him.

Sri Ramakrishna's parable of two birds Excerpt from *Spiritual Life for Modern Times* By Swami Vireswarananda

The two birds laid their eggs on the sea-side, and when they went out for food and returned, they found that in the meanwhile the eggs were washed away by the waves and carried into the sea. They were very very much upset and they resolved to empty the sea by removing the water. They took a little water in their beaks and threw it on the sands. In this way they were

going on throughout day and night. Then Varuna, the Lord of the Sea, wanted to know what the matter was. He came and asked the birds, "What are you doing?" They replied, "The sea has washed away our eggs, so we are trying to empty the sea so that we may get them back." Varuna was very much pleased at their determination and he gave back the eggs to the birds. So without effort, without struggle, no grace will come, that is certain. It is only when we put our maximum effort that we are capable of having that grace.



PREPARATION FOR GOD REALIZATION PART 2

SWAMI ISHATMANANDA

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Swami Vivekananda addressed humanity, echoing the Rishis of the old, amritasya putrah, children of the immortal bliss!

The 10th book of the Rig-Veda regards the conception of God as personal & impersonal both; manifest & un-manifest; Existence as well as non-existence.

Different Upanishads give ideas about God.

Isha Upanishad says: The whole universe is pervaded by Ishwara or God, who is both within & without, moving & unmoving, far & near.

Katha Upanishad says: God is the root of the world. Realization of God is Shreyas, Supreme Blessedness, in contrast with Preyas; Temporal satisfaction.

Mandukya Upanishad says: The Supreme Being is Turiya – Transcendental Consciousness.

Taittiriya Upanishad says: It is Atman, The Self beyond physical, mental, intellectual & causal sheaths.

Mundaka Upanishad says: Atman, the Supreme Being, is like an ocean into which all the individual souls enter & become one.

Prashna Upanishad says: God is the Supreme Prajapati, the creator, in whom reside both matter and energy.

Kena Upanishad says: The Supreme Being is beyond the perception of the senses & the mind.

Chandogya Upanishad says: This universe is Brahman.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says: It is pure consciousness.

Svetasvatara Upanishad says: The Divine being, though formless, gives rise to different forms- “Thou art the woman, Thou art the Man”

Summarizing all the expressions of the Upanishads regarding the Creator, God we can say, according to Vedanta God is real because one can have experiential knowledge of God.

The Question may be asked, “Where or what was God before creation?” The Hindu’s answer is: God was in a transcendental state before creation. That means God was beyond time, space & causation. This state of God is known as Nirguna Brahman.

Now, an age-old question, as we all know two things are necessary for creation

- 1) Intelligent Cause
- 2) Material Cause

From a lump of clay a clay jar is created by the potter. We can understand this. We also know the effect of the transformation; the lump of clay is transformed into a clay pot/jar and no clay is left or remains.

When it is said that Atman, Consciousness, is both the intelligent cause and, at the same time, the material cause, that out of Brahman this Brahmanda is created, obviously, the question will be, “Is Brahman transformed into Brahmanda with no more Brahman remaining, as in the case of the lump of clay and the clay jar?”

We get the two answers from two great philosophers, Shankara and Ramanuja. Shankaracharya put forward the doctrine of apparent creation: Vivarta Vada (विवर्त वाद). On a white screen, when different pictures are projected, we may think the screen has changed into the pictures, but actually the screen is unchanged.

Ramanujacharya, the propounder of Vishishtadvaita, taught the doctrine of Real Transformation, Parinama Vada (परिणाम वाद). According to him, the cause and the effect are identical in nature or essence.

In the Katha Upanishad (II. i.10) we find statements like, "What is here, the same is there; and what is there the same is here." यदेविह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ॥

That is why Swami Vivekananda declared, "You are all God, and you are the soul of the universe. Know, then, that Thou art He and model your whole life accordingly." (CW 2, 236 - 238)

What is God Realization?

God Realization means, I have to know my real self, "Know Thy Self" we can also say "Know Thy Creator". It is not easy.

Lord Sri Krishna in his unique teaching, The Bhagavad Gita (7.3) clarifies:

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।।

manuṣhyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaśchid yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānāṁ kaśchin māṁ veti tattvataḥ.

Among thousands of men a rare one endeavors for perfection. Even of the Perfected ones, who are diligent, one perchance knows me in truth.

For God Realization and to obtain Higher Spiritual principles we should properly prepare ourselves.

Lord Jesus Christ Said, "Those who have eyes will see, those who have ears will hear (Luke: 8:5-15; Mathew 13:16)

After six years of extreme austerity, Prince Gautama attained the highest illumination and became Buddha. He with great compassion for fellow human beings declared, "Opened are the gates of immortality for you, अपावृतं तेषाम् अमृतस्य द्वारम्.

Ye who have ears to hear, release your faith!" हे श्रोतृवन्तः प्रमुञ्चन्तु श्रद्धाम्!

Begin with faith and complete with God realization that is the course of our Spiritual quest- Back to Godhead.

Who am I? (कः अयम्)? God, Brahman in the embodied self.

Who is my creator? God Himself.

Out of What? God Again.

Why Did God create me? स वै नैव रेमे, He was not feeling well.

Why? Since loneliness cannot give happiness all the time, यस्माद् एकाकी न रमते ॥

Hence, it is as if the all-powerful Atman thought, I am alone, I want to be many, एकोहम् बहुस्यामिति ॥

Then what happened? God became the wife and again the husband, जाया च पतिश्च ॥ He became everything.

God realization means knowing one's own Self. Going back to the source, back to Godhead.

God has created this universe and entered into that Creation तत् सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्राविशत् ॥ (Taittiriya Up., II. vi. 1)

Swamiji said, "Each Soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external & internal."

"Spiritual Knowledge (i.e. Knowledge of the Self or God) is the only thing that can destroy our miseries forever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time."

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna said: "God Realization is the goal of human life (ईश्वर लाभ-इ मनुष्य जीवनेर उद्देश्य)." He not only encouraged to strive for God Realization but also has blessed us all, "May you attain with Self-knowledge, तोमादेर चैतन्य होक."

Different Paths to God Realization

Swami Vivekananda said, "No man is born to any religion; he has a religion in his own soul ... Each life has a current running through it, and this current will eventually take it to God (CW 6, p 82).

Hinduism places before mankind two modes of life,

1. Pravritti Dharma or Worldly enjoyment (bhoga) and material prosperity (abhyudaya).

2. Nivritti Dharma or Spiritual liberation (moksha) and achieving highest good through renunciation (nihshreyasha).

People are free to choose any path. The Law giver Manu Maharaj explained (Manu Smriti 5.56), Pravritti is natural to humans but nivritti produces great results, प्रवृत्तिरेषा भूतानां निवृत्तिस्तु महाफला ॥

How will we know which is प्रवृत्ति कर्म or भोग कर्म? And, which is निवृत्ति कर्म or त्याग कर्म?

1. Pravriti or Bhoga Karma = Work with attachment; meditation for relaxation or health

2. Nivritti or Tyaga Karma = work with detachment; meditation for God Realization

In Nivritti, there are two main highways for God Realization, Jnana Marga & Bhakti Marga.

These two ways are based on certain fundamental differences:

According to the path of Jnana, Reality is impersonal.

According to the path of Bhakti God is personal.

Jnana is subject oriented – It is an enquiry into the true nature of the self.

Bhakti is object oriented – It is an attempt to know the creator of this universe.

In the path of Jnana the relation between the Individual Soul and the Ultimate Reality is, “I” and “That”.

In the path of Bhakti the relation between God and the Devotee is “I” and “Thou”.

Jnana path follows, “Neti”, “Neti”, not this, not this.

Bhakti path follows, “Iti”, “Iti”, this is, this is.

Jnana path stresses self-effort.

Bhakti path stresses divine grace.

The goal of Jnana is Self-Knowledge (Atma Jnana).

The goal of Bhakti is to See God (Ishwara darshan).

Swami Vivekananda said (CW 5 p. 292), “The ultimate goal of all mankind, the aim and end of all religions , is but one, Reunion with God... the aim is one, the method of attaining it may vary with the different temperaments of men... Every man must develop according to his nature.

The Hindus have developed four golden paths to be united with God

- Karma, Bhakti, Raja, Jnana
- Karma Yoga = Self Sacrifice
- Bhakti Yoga = Self Surrender
- Raja Yoga = Self Control
- Jnana Yoga = Self Analysis

Preparation for God Realization

We have heard Swami Vivekananda saying, “You are all God”. Then, what is the need for God Realization?

The basic cause of all suffering is ego. The ego has built a wall between God and the Individual.

In the Panchadasi, a well-known Advaitic treatise, Vidyaranya Muni describes two types of creation:

1. Ishwara Sristi (Divine Creation)
2. Jiva Sristi (Self Creation)

Every individual lives in his or her own private world. What is the harm? The harm is that, we do not understand the cosmic law of karma.

In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the famous Rishi (Yagnavalkya) said to another very famous lady Seer (Gargi) that in divine creation there is order, rhythm, and harmony, “Under the rule of the absolute, O Gargi, the sun and moon are held in their own courses, heaven and earth hold their own positions.” [Brihadaranyaka Up. 3.8.9]

एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी सूर्य चन्द्रमसौ विधृतौ तिष्ठतः
एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी द्वावास्थिव्यो विधृतौ तिष्ठतः ॥

That means everything in the universe is controlled by universal law. The Law of karma is therefore very important.

By not understanding or ignoring this law we create our own world on the basis of our own experiences – past or present.

What is the basis of our action?

The basic instinct in all living beings is to protect oneself.

This instinct makes us act and react in three different ways,

1. Towards an object (attachment)
2. Against an object (aversion)
3. Away from an object (fear)

Actions give rise to happy or unhappy experiences which leave impressions (samskaras) in our mind.

Obstructions to God Realization

Obstructions are there in the path of God realization. In the Introduction to “Markings” by Dag Hammarskjold, it has been clearly mentioned, “Spiritual path is not and never easy. If one chooses that path means he or she has accepted an ongoing struggle for their life. Along the way they encounter self doubt, loneliness, despair, disappointment and at times restlessness and anger at themselves”

Fortunately for us the realized souls, Avatars have given suggestions to overcome those obstacles. Sri Ramakrishna gave a few suggestions so that the devotees may be free from obstacles in the spiritual path.

One is prayer. If one prays to God sincerely, God removes all obstacles and makes everything favorable.

Second is the company of holy persons. He is a holy man who lifts others minds to a higher realm of spirituality. Holy persons are exemplars of holiness. Their lives vindicate the existence of God.

Third is leave in solitude. In solitude all alone one should judge his own mind. Watch his

thoughts. This exercise gives discriminative power to understand the difference between real and the unreal, between temporary and permanent. If we experience that the world is not real, we will not be attracted to it. Spiritual disciplines remove our attachment for the world and create in us a longing for God.

“Longing is like the rosy dawn. After the dawn out comes the sun. Longing is followed by the vision of God”, says Sri Ramakrishna.

What Happens After God Realization

For those, who follow the path of Jnana, get Liberation (मुक्ति).

एकाकी रमते नित्यं स्वभावगुणवर्जितम्।

ब्रह्मज्ञान रसास्वादी जीवन्मुक्तः स उच्यते॥

He becomes free from any dependence, free from any qualities, Sattwa, Raja, Tama, always and every moment enjoys the Eternal Bliss, he is free in this human life itself.

Again in (Yoga Vashishtha Upakaran) it says, “He who is unperturbed, undisturbed in danger or in happiness, he is liberated,

आपत्सु च यथाकालं सुख दुःखेष्वनारतम्।

न दृष्यति ग्लायति यः स मुक्त इति कथ्यते॥

Mundaka Upanishad (2.2.8) clearly mentioned that, realizing the all-pervading Brahman, all doubts of the seeker vanish, all results of karma vanish,

भिद्यते हृदय ग्रन्थि छिद्यन्ते सर्व संशयाः क्षियन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥

For those, who follow the path of Bhakti, realize God,

Bhakta feels -- heart is always full of Bliss having the company of God, the source of Joy and happiness, नित्य उत्सव भवत्येषाम् नित्यश्रीः नित्य मंगलम्॥

[End]

ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT



Babar Ali was nine when while returning from school he would see kids working in the fields instead of being at school.

"I realised they had never attended school due to lack of finances. Plus, our village didn't have good schools. Even I used to travel about 10 kms up and down every day to attend school," recalls Babar Ali, who is from Murshidabad in West Bengal.

At 9, when most kids cannot even do their own homework, Babar started a school of his own in his backyard, "I was a class 5 student...I got together eight young kids and started teaching them after returning from my school. I just thought I'll teach them what I learnt in class," says Babar.

He would take broken pieces of chalk from his school, and use terracotta tiles at home to make a blackboard.

"When my teacher found out about my home school, she started giving me a full box of chalk," he says with a smile.

As the students did not have any resources or even a syllabus, they used newspapers as reading material.

"I just wanted to impart education somehow. I didn't care about the syllabus, I thought if they learn any small thing, it will be an achievement," says Babar.

"Sometimes, I would not even have lunch, I would just come back from school and directly start teaching them," he says.

To ensure that the students regularly attended

class, he would often buy them sweets from his own pocket money.

To convince their parents to send them to school, he would collect some rice from his relatives and give it to them.

All along, Babar never skipped going to his own school, "I couldn't afford to miss school because what would I teach my kids if I didn't learn something there?," he says.

Today, Babar is 21 and his school goes up up to class 8 and has about 300 students. Six students from his first batch are now teachers at his school.

For a long time, Babar ran the school using his own pocket money and some support from his family.

But as his work started becoming well known, the Ramakrishna Mission began to help him out with basic necessities like books and stationery.

He has also started receiving a few donations to run his school.

Babar, who has completed his graduation in English, is now pursuing a Masters of Arts degree.

In the future, he wants to create a "dream school" for kids from underprivileged backgrounds

"I believe that if you are passionate about something then you can achieve anything. Age, finances, other hurdles, they just don't matter and eventually everything works out," he concludes.

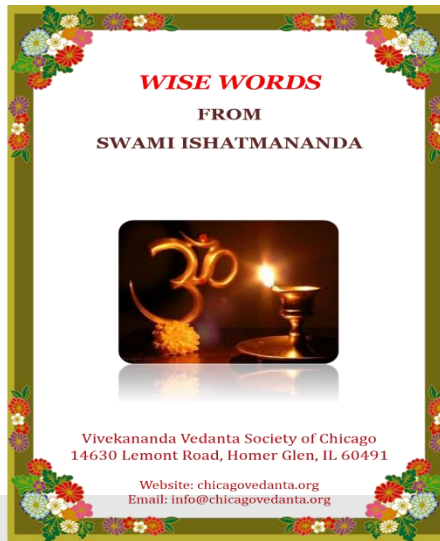
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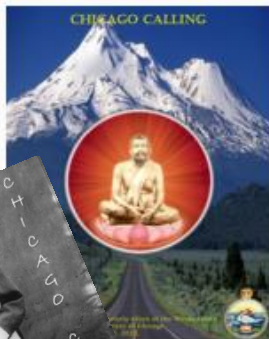
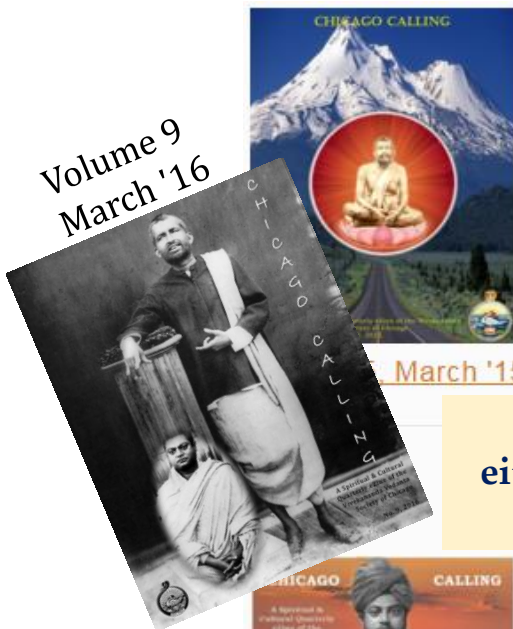
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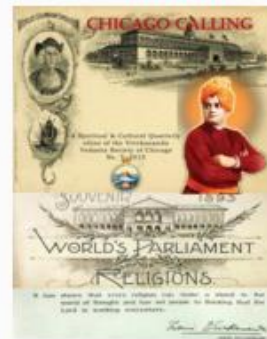
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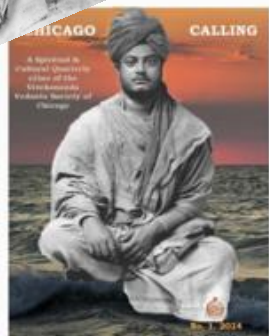


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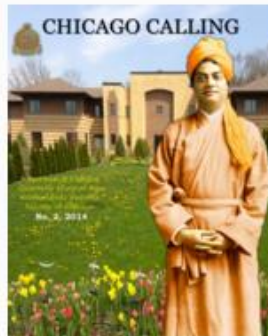


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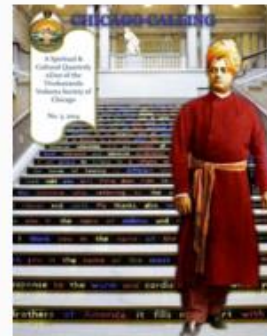
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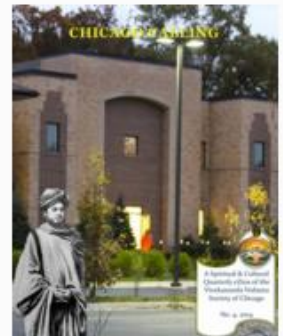
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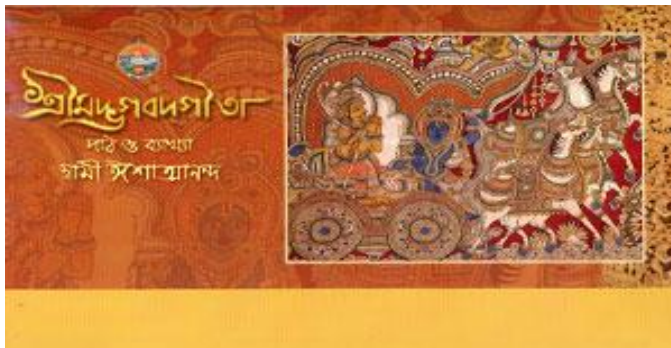
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