

CHICAGO CALLING

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EDITORIAL

HINDUISM: THE RESULT OF A GREAT RESEARCH

Thousands of years ago, a group of great minds observed three special characteristics of human beings: 1) everyone wants to be happy, 2) no one wants to die, and 3) each and everyone wants to know everything. So, their research goal was to investigate if there is a source to address all these aspirations and to find out what it is. These three aspirations were the objective of their research, and they started examining the external world for answers. While analysing the external world, they found that basically five things are the basis of the entire world. These five elements (Pancha-bhutha) are: earth, water, fire, air, and space. They were happy to find out the common source of all the external phenomena.

They next started thinking about how these elements are reacting on individual minds. Instead of searching the outside world, they started examining their own minds. Here again they found that there were five instruments, using which human beings acquire knowledge. These five instruments are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin, and these are the five organs of knowledge (Pancha jnana-indria). These five organs collect information about external objects, composed of the five basic elements (Pancha-bhutha), but they do not actually make any subjective decisions about them. So, they inferred that there must be something else that is directing them. Then they discovered that all this information is going to an internal instrument, which they called the Antahkarana. They further analysed the Antahkarana, and found that it has four aspects of operation based on the different types of work it is performing: 1) the aspect of thinking but unable to take a decision, 2) the aspect of making a very firm decision, 3) recording of all the experiences (as a storehouse), and finally, 4) the main sense of identity through which all activities are happening. They named these four aspects of

Antahkarana as: manah (mind), buddhi (intellect), chitta (repository), and ahamkara (the I sense). They again started deeply researching to find out what the fundamental source of this I sense or ego is? In this last phase of their inquiry, they made a great discovery and found through their own direct experience that the source of all the external and the internal aspects of the creation is Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness that is all pervading, without any form, and the basis of the entire creation having millions of names and forms. They called this source Brahman.

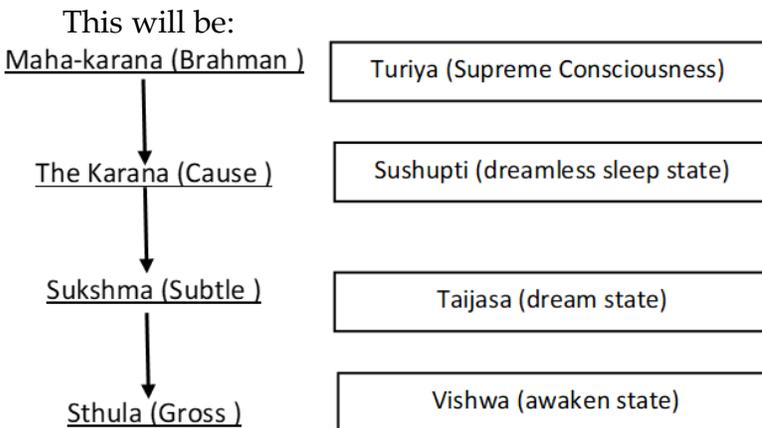
They were exceedingly happy with this discovery! They not only celebrated their success but also announced this discovery to the entire universe. It has been expressed in some of the old Sanskrit scriptures, where these great minds, who are known as Rshis or Munis, said, "Listen, oh you! the children of immortal bliss, I have discovered the truth which remains on the other side of ignorance". They urged humans to remove the ignorance, realise the truth, and enjoy eternal bliss.

Now, the question comes, what is this truth that they are talking about? The very nearest answer they could give about this truth is: Sat-Chit-Ananda swarupa: Sat (existence), Chit (Knowledge), Ananda (Bliss). This is subjective, so one has to realise it for himself/herself. It cannot be explained through mere words because it is beyond time, space, and causation. It cannot be compared with anything else because it is one and not two (Ekam eva advitiam). The sages were only able to give some hints about it to help anyone who is also interested in a deep investigation into their own being. The following hints about Brahman can be found in Maha-Nirvana-Tantra: 1) That from where the creation comes, 2) on which the creation rests, and 3) into which it merges back, that is Brahman.

We can find another set of hints in Katha-Upanishad (2/3/12) as follows, "That Atman or Brahman cannot be conveyed through words, cannot be understood through thoughts or mind, cannot be seen by eyes. One can only feel that it is there, as has been expressed by the Sanskrit word-Asti."

The Rshis realised that it is too subtle for ordinary people to understand and experience. Hence, they developed through their realisation a beautiful system which explained or answered three great questions: 1) who is the creator, 2) what is this creation, 3) what is the relation between the creator and the creation.

They started with the Supreme Brahman, which is absolute without any movement, and they called it the Impersonal God or Supreme Brahman. In the second stage, there is a subtle movement, and they called it the Personal God/Ishwara. From Ishwara the creation started with three basic qualities, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The permutation and combination of these three qualities created sentient and insentient beings. The duality of good and bad also came from the same source, and the friction between the good and the bad became alive. The good was termed as Sura and the bad was termed as Asura. If we make a table of creation, it will be like an upside-down tree, and this upside-down tree of the creation has been mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita by Bhagavan Shri Krishna.



In the Jagrat/awakened state, we find our body—the human. Analysing the human, the great Rshis found that it has five sheaths:

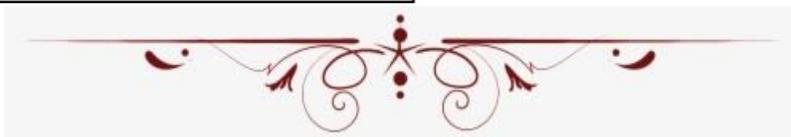
- 1) Gross body (Annamaya),
- 2) Subtle force (Manomaya),
- 3) Vital force (Pranamaya),
- 4) Knowledge (Vijnanamaya),
- and 5) Bliss (Anandamaya).

This is the creation of a human being coming all the way down from the Supreme Brahman. Where we see a person standing, it is Brahman in reality. Through different processes the true Consciousness, Brahman, became covered by five sheaths/layers, which comprise the human. Now, the goal of spirituality is to go back to the root source.

This creation has been explained from different viewpoints. One group of people said, there is no creation at all and only the mind is cognizing/imaging. This theory is known as the doctrine of non-origination. Another group said, there is something, which is called phenomena, and it has a temporary existence; this theory is known as the doctrine of phenomenalism. The third group advocated the doctrine of transformation. Whatever is the view about creation, human beings should try to go back to the main source to get eternal existence and eternal bliss.

In this process, we find that the Rshis, understanding different attitudes of Human minds, developed four different paths or practices. They are known as: 1) Jnana Yoga, 2) Dhyana Yoga, 3) Bhakti Yoga, and 4) Karma Yoga. We can conclude by quoting Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, the present-day incarnation of God, "The goal of every human being is to realise God".

What is God? For our clear understanding we can say, it is the embodiment of love and unselfishness.





Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta: A New Perspective in Service

Swami Sarvadevananda
Vedanta Society of Southern California

OM saahasraśīrṣāpuruṣaḥ, sahasrākṣa-sahasrapāt, viśvabhuvanm viśva nārāyanam devam, akṣaram paramam padam. Om śānti śānti śānti!

This universe is Eternal Being Narayana, the Imperishable, the Supreme, the goal, multi headed and multi eyed, omnipresent and omniscient, the resplendent, the source of light for the whole universe! Peace, Peace, Peace!

Thanks to all the panelists and devotees who are observing this program today. My topic today is *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta — A New Perspective on Service*.

The fundamental purpose of all the world's religions is to see God everywhere. In fact, it is the philosophy of renunciation and service. It is the basic idea behind all the diverse religions in practice in India. Swami Vivekananda said that: a) The National ideal of India is *Renunciation and Service*. b) The Upanishadic idea is that Brahman is everywhere, is omnipotent, omnipresent and is residing in the heart of every created being. And, that serving that very God as a part of spiritual sadhana should be the goal, the highest achievement, and the fulfillment of human life.

This idea of service to man is found in every religion. In the Islamic religion, we find the teaching of giving gifts to the under-privileged as a part of spiritual practices. In Christianity we find the word "charity" used so much. We hear Christ saying, "You fed me when I was hungry, and you clothed me when I was naked." In Hinduism we find stories about Dadheechi, the great sage in ancient times, who willingly sacrificed himself to protect the gods from demons. Similarly, Lord Shiva became the blue-necked One by drinking poison for the good of all. The service idea, as we

mentioned, is found not only in the Srimad Bhāgavatam where the idea of service to man is emphasized, but can be traced to the Upanishads.

The idea is everywhere, but Sri Ramakrishna gave a unique and new perspective of this service idea to the people of this age. Sri Ramakrishna was established in his own spiritual nature and was always steeped in deep absorption in Brahman in samadhi. Coming down from that state of Oneness, he saw nothing but God and promoted the philosophy of *Shiva jnane jiva sevā*. We see that even though he always remained in a high non-dual state, still he used to feel deeply the agonies of the afflicted and would cry seeing the suffering of people when his mind used to come down to normal plane. We recall an incident from his life: He was going on a pilgrimage with Mathur, a landlord. But seeing the suffering of the famine-affected, hungry and emaciated people at Deoghar, he forgot about his pilgrimage, and sat with those people, and pleaded with Mathur, to serve them with food, clothing and gifts of money. He said he would not move from that place and refused to continue the pilgrimage until their hunger etc. was appeased. To Sri Ramakrishna, this service was not mere compassion to man as man, but service to man as God. This is the uniqueness of the Ramakrishna tradition, started by Sri Ramakrishna himself, whom we consider to be the embodiment of Upanishadic Truth, the compact personality of the Upanishadic realization.

On another occasion we find Sri Ramakrishna feeling the oneness not only of humans but also the pain of grass. When someone walked over some grass, he cried out in pain, physically feeling as if someone was walking over him and his chest

became blood-red.

This idea of service is a much higher idea than that of charity. Charity has the idea that—"I am someone great, giving you out of my compassion." There is some sense of superiority in my giving. But, the *sevā* idea, as shown by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and others is – "I am fortunate and privileged to serve and humbled to get an opportunity to serve God in this form." Swami Vivekananda said, "Let the giver kneel down and the receiver receive it and bless." The receiver is God, and the giver is offering his heartfelt service to God. It is a totally different perspective of serving human beings in a divine way.

The other uniqueness of this *sevā* ideal of Sri Ramakrishna is that it differs from the traditional ideal of worship in the temple. In Hindu practice, we are familiar with the traditional *sevā* idea. That service was focused on the shrine, on gods and goddesses and deities. Though the idea of service to all-beings was there in spiritual texts and philosophy, it was not followed much towards the living God residing in animals, humans and others. But Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Holy Mother extended that traditional idea of service of God, which was restricted to just the temple. Thus, the idea that a human being is God Himself and is to be worshipped, got established. So, by applying this practice to our daily life, a new path is going to open up leading to freedom from all bondage.

Vivekananda, feeling the oneness with Brahman within, and with people who were suffering, made a new path for all of us -- a path of practical application of this service idea. When a volcano in Fiji erupted, Vivekananda could not sleep the whole night – staying at Belur Math far away from Fiji -- restlessly pacing back and forth, his sensitive mind feel the pain and agonies of the affected people. He was connected with the cosmos.

During the Calcutta plague, he left the health resort of Darjeeling, ignored his own seriously ill health, and went among the plague-stricken people. It is not correct to think that merely

plague-stricken people were being served, but it was God, in humans, that was being worshipped. Vivekananda was even going to sell the newly purchased Belur Math property to get the necessary funds for the plague-relief work.

Though the ideal of *atma moksha* that is *for one's own salvation*, still continues as the top-most ideal in the Ramakrishna tradition, at the same time, the ideal of *jagat hita*, that is *for the good of the world* is practiced with equal importance. The age-old monastic tradition of India – of living the great ideal of renunciation and detachment following the path of studying scriptures and meditating etc. are retained in their entirety. But to that ideal has been added a new dimension of spiritual practice - - that is, to serve God in human beings.

Swami Vivekananda said that people need to know that God-realization is possible through not only the practice of meditation, prayer and philosophical discussion, but also by serving God in human beings. So this ideal of turning attention from outside to inside and inside to outside, seeing God in the both aspects of divinity, transcendent and immanent, has been accepted as the highest philosophy, in this Vedanta tradition. Try to see God with eyes open as one tries to see Him with eyes closed. Ramakrishna said, this *jagat*, the world, is permeated by the One Absolute Consciousness and Bliss. Whether we know it or not, we are interacting with the same divinity. That is why the monks of the Ramakrishna Order keep themselves engaged in serving sick and ailing people, in various places like Kankhal, Vrindavan, Varanasi, Uttarkashi, etc..

At the beginning, the traditional sanyasins of Northern India were puzzled seeing the activities of the Ramakrishna monks. They questioned, "What type of sadhus are they, who are engaged in washing, cleaning and nursing sick patients with medicine and diet, giving up their Vedantic studies?" They used to call the monks of the Order as *bhāngi* (outcaste) *sādhu*. They understood later that it was a practical application of Vedanta. That impacted the whole traditional Hindu monastic

system, by giving a new perspective to spiritual practice. By serving *Rogi Nārāyana*, the Lord in the form of a sick person, the attending monk is attaining the same God-realization.

Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, started orphanages in Murshidabad. He used to bathe the muslim orphan children with the Vedic mantra *sahasra seersha purushah sahasraksha sahsrapāt*. In ritual temple-worship the deity is bathed with the chanting of this mantra. For Swami Akhandananda, it was not merely giving bath to the orphan children but it was to bathe *Nārāyana* -- the Supreme Lord in the form of a child, whom no one can take care!

Even today in Kankhal, Vrindavan, Varanasi and other hospital centers once a year our monks worship every patient with offerings of flowers, fruits, garlands, new cloths etc. after waving incense and candles just as one does during worship in a temple. Being inspired by this ideal, it is observed that other monastic organizations are also gradually adding service-wings like dispensaries, schools, relief activities and the like.

Whenever there is a need, God descends and gives a new direction to spiritual life. Sri Ramakrishna gave this new direction in this age and a tradition is gaining momentum in the society day by day. Through all these activities -- educational and technical training schools and colleges, orphanages, projects for women's upliftment, self-employment and agricultural programs, vocational training courses, and serving prisoners in jail and reforming their characters the

monks are serving God. The prisoners are also God, who for some reason or another, took a wrong path. To bring them back to the mainstream, this effort of awakening their inner consciousness, is a special contribution of the Order in the modern time. Ramakrishna monastics address all the three levels of human needs: *Anna* (food-clothing-medicine etc.), *Vidya* (technical and secular knowledge), *Jnana* (spiritual knowledge).

Traditionally, one-sided spiritual practice of *Vedānta Vichāra* was the norm. But, Vivekananda emphasized that to build a harmonious monastic life, every monk should pay attention to and practice all the four paths-- *jnana-karma-yoga-bhakti*. This synthesis is a unique path for Self realization. It will make a monk meditative, and at the same time enables him to see God everywhere with eyes open.

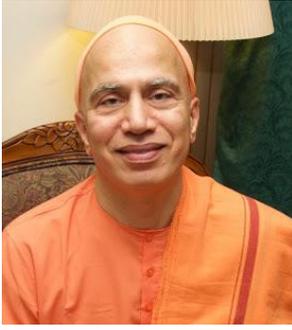
This *sevā* idea, grounded on the principles of *sanātana dharma* has inspired many people and a huge number of centers called *bhava prachar parishads*, have been formed and are run by devotees both in the East and West.

Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of realizing God by serving God in man -- *Shiva Jnane Jiva Sevā* -- is really the most modern and unique feature of the Ramakrishna Order and we see its influence on society and even other monastic communities. The practice of this service ideal is bringing peace, joy and spiritual growth starting from the physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual levels and leading ultimately to attainment and fulfillment at the spiritual level.



“May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls-and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.”

-- Swami Vivekananda



Vedanta: Philosophy of Healing

Swami Tygananda
Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston

The Parliament of Religions has always been an amazing gathering. This time we are doing it virtually for obvious reasons. Meeting one another virtually is definitely different from meeting in person. But now that we have gotten used to it after nearly eighteen months of this terrible pandemic, I think it is better to meet virtually than to not meet at all.

When we meet in gatherings like this and have an opportunity to exchange our ideas and thoughts, it has a great healing effect—many of our questions are answered and many of our doubts are resolved. There is, therefore, not merely the joy of meeting one another but also inner healing.

What do we need healing from? Primarily from pain and suffering. One thing we realize is that pain and suffering are inseparable from our daily life. Whether we are human beings, animals or trees and plants, suffering is an inseparable part of our life. All religions try to address the issue of pain and suffering, and suggest ways to bring about healing.

Although we may be doing fine in many respects, there are certain issues in life which may produce pain and suffering. The Hindus normally ascribe pain and suffering to three specific sources. In Sanskrit these sources are called Adhyatmika, Adhibhautika and Adhidaivika,

Adhyatmika is the pain and suffering which comes from one's own self, that is, one's own body and mind. No matter how much organic food we eat or how much exercise we take, we cannot say that we have never fallen sick. Living in a pandemic we have already seen the number of

infections, hospitalizations and deaths. That is a living reality which is very evident to us, especially in these troubled times.

Adhibhautika is the pain and suffering which comes from those around us. Criminals, nasty people, wild animals etc. are all included in this category.

The third source of pain and suffering, the Adhidaivika, includes the natural phenomena like storm, fire, tsunamis, floods, and earthquakes. We know that these also cause a lot of pain and suffering.

There are three primary responses to meet these three causes of pain and suffering. To address the suffering that is caused to our body and mind we generally turn to medicine. There are different systems of medicine. The Hindu system of medicine is called Ayurveda. It is an integrated and holistic method which tries to root out the cause of the illness, not merely treat its symptoms.

The second is the pain and suffering which comes to us from other people. To deal with this, we often turn to management techniques, such as interpersonal relationships, leadership training, counseling and therapy, and also seek help from law enforcement. The Hindu tradition recommends living according to Dharma, that is, living one's life guided by ethics and morality, as this protects us by giving us both strength and wisdom in dealing with pain wisely.

The third form, Adhidaivika, is the pain that come from nature. There isn't much we can do to stop or prevent this. We cannot stop floods, we cannot prevent earthquakes, etc. But we can build dams or earthquake-proof houses to minimize the

damage. Most of us also turn to prayer and worship, and seek divine help to overcome pain and suffering caused by natural calamities.

Besides taking all these measures, we need to look a bit deeper. The Hindu approach is to go to the root of the problem. If we want to take down a tree, just chopping off the branches does not help. We have to remove the tree along with its roots, so that the problem won't sprout again.

What is the root cause of pain and suffering?

One thing we discover is that they are both related to the body and the mind. No matter what problem we have or what suffering we have, it comes either from the body or the mind. The way it manifests could be very different, but it does come from the body and the mind.

How do we know this? It is simple. When we go to sleep, when we are not even dreaming, we don't have any pain, we don't have any suffering, we don't have any sorrow. It is only in the waking state and the dream state that we have sorrow. In the dream state, we can get nightmares or terrible dreams. Sometimes the waking state can be nightmarish also. So sorrow can come either in the waking state or in the dream state.

But there is a third state we all go through and it is called deep sleep. In Sanskrit it is called "Sushupti". In deep sleep our body and mind don't really disappear, but they become mostly nonfunctional. In that state everyone experiences peace and joy. In that state there is no experience of pain and suffering. Healing takes place very naturally in deep sleep. Unfortunately, we can't remain in the state of deep sleep forever. When we wake up in the morning, all the pains and sorrows come back to haunt us again.

The question that Hindu philosophers ask is: "Is it possible to recreate the deep sleep experience even when we are awake?" When we are asleep, we are unconscious. Can I experience similar deep peace and freedom consciously when I am awake? That is the challenge! For that we have to look at ourselves and ask, "Who am I?"

The human personality is primarily threefold. There is the visible part of my personality, the body. I can see my body and I can see everyone's body. Then there is the invisible part of my personality, which is the mind. By mind I mean the whole package: the mind, the intellect, the ego, our thoughts, hopes, memories, everything which is a part of me but which the surgeon will not find when my body is cut open. Is there anything else in me other than the body and the mind? Vedanta points out that there is the spirit within me. In Sanskrit it is simply called the Atman. It is the only nonmaterial part of my personality. It is the real me.

All pain, sorrow and suffering come from the material parts, the body and the mind. The spirit, the Atman is always free, always divine, it has no problems, no sickness, no pain, no suffering. If that's the real me, why am I experiencing this suffering now? The body and mind are only layers. How come the Atman which is free, pure, and joyful is experiencing suffering? And the simple answer is that the Atman has forgotten that it is the Atman.

If I am a millionaire and if I lose my memory, then I don't know that I am a millionaire, and I may start thinking of myself as a homeless beggar, then I can't be happy. Although I am a millionaire, I have forgotten it and I don't know it. And that is the problem! We don't really stand in need of healing, because we are the Atman. We have forgotten that we are the Atman. We think we are the body and the mind, and therefore the "healing" in a spiritual sense is for the Atman to regain its memory, the Atman to remember that it is the Atman, the Atman to stop identifying with the body and the mind.

The process that makes it possible to remove these layers is called Yoga. Nowadays, when we think of Yoga, we immediately think of Asanas or yoga postures. But Yoga primarily means a spiritual discipline. Yoga means joining, that is joining the finite with the infinite; joining the

limited with the unlimited; joining the individual self called the Jivatma with the supreme self called the Paramatma. Yoga is the practice through which the Atman, who has forgotten itself, will regain its true nature and healing will take place naturally. That healing will not be temporary. That healing will be permanent. That healing will never ever go away. Such permanent healing comes through Yoga.

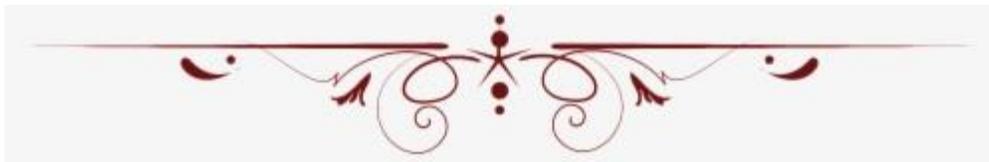
If you have not read Swami Vivekananda's four Yogas, please do read them. The four Yogas are Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga. They are not really four different paths, but the same spiritual path in which different faculties of the mind are employed. When the reasoning part of the mind is dominant in any practice, it belongs to Jnana Yoga. When the emotions and feelings are prominent in any practice, we call it Bhakti Yoga. When the power of the will is very prominent internally, then we call it Raja Yoga. When the will-power is very prominent externally, as we carry out our activities in the world, we call

it Karma Yoga.

Swamiji's four Yogas are the textbooks for those who take spiritual life seriously. If you want to learn how to bring healing in your own life, you would do well to read these books. Don't accept anything blindly. If what you read or hear makes sense to you, try to see how you can cultivate it, how you can practice it day after day.

Swami Vivekananda said that "an ounce of practice is worth tons of theory." We can go on talking endlessly. These are huge subjects and there is no end to speaking about it. Ultimately, what matters is whether we can take even one teaching and try to live according to it. Then it will completely transform our lives. This will make us better human beings, and to the extent we become better human beings ourselves, we will be able to bring that joy and healing to the people around us as well.

And that is the goal. Be good, be honest, be perfect and try to help people around you become good, honest, perfect as well.



“Vedanta does not take the position that this world is only a miserable one. That would be untrue. At the same time, it is a mistake to say that this world is full of happiness and blessings. So it is useless to tell children that this world is all good, all flowers, all milk and honey. That is what we have all dreamt. At the same time it is erroneous to think, because one man has suffered more than another, that all is evil. It is this duality, this play of good and evil that makes our world of experiences. At the same time the Vedanta says, “Do not think that good and evil are two, are two separate essences, for they are one and the same thing, appearing in different degrees and in different guises and producing differences of feeling in the same mind.”

-- Swami Vivekananda



Yoga: An Ancient Method of Healing

Swami Atmavidyananda Giri
Kriya Vedanta Gurukulam

*Om! Sadashiva samarambham Shankaracharya
madhyamam
Asmad Acharya paryantam vande guru paramparam*

Namaskar! Good morning! I bow to the living presence of God in the entire creation and in each one of you. I come from the sacred tradition of Kriya Yoga. Kriya yoga is considered as a tree of yoga which is prescribed by sage Patanjali in Yoga Sutras, the aphorisms on yoga. It is called the royal science or the royal secret by Lord Sri Krishna. All forms of yoga branch out from this ancient scientific meditation practice. In Bhagavad Gita fourth chapter, second verse, Lord Krishna declares that this knowledge of yoga is being passed on through the guru disciple tradition, and the lineage continues in the modern times with Mahavatar Babaji, to our guru preceptors like Paramahansa Yoganandaji, Paramahansa Hariharanandaji, and our current master, Paramahansa Prajnananandaji Maharaj.

Today we will explore the subject of yoga, an ancient method of healing. The question of healing arises only when there is suffering. What is suffering, where does the suffering exist? Suffering in simple terms is a state of imbalance which brings sorrow. Imbalance could be in the body or the mind, imbalance could be mild, medium or severe. A state of imbalance in which the individual does not want to remain and wishes to come out of it, because continuing in that state of imbalance increases the pain. In Vedanta as we heard from Revered Swamiji's pain exists at three levels, 'adhibhautika, adhidaivika and adhyatmik'. We can simplify this as suffering at physical, mental or psychological, and third, causal or spiritual level.

All of us are familiar with physical pain. Imbalance in the bodily manifests in the form of diseases. It may come from food, environment, lifestyle, genetic or from a deeper mental level, which we will discuss next. Most of our sufferings exist at a mental level. Diseases that manifest because of these are termed as psychosomatic diseases. Let us take the example of anger, which is very common in many people. An angry person not only suffers himself but also inflicts pain on others through thoughts, words or actions. Anger, whether expressed or suppressed, brings pain. Restlessness and anxiety are the signs of mental imbalance.

The causal or spiritual imbalance manifests as unfulfillment, emptiness, inadequacy, and a feeling of separation from fullness or God. These deepest imbalances are often not visible. Now the question comes, are we destined to be in pain and sorrow? In the Yoga Sutra second book, sixteenth sutra, sage Patanjali says 'heyam dukham anagatam', a clarion call to mankind that pain is not inevitable, and future sorrows can be avoided. The sage says, in the second book again, twenty eighth sutra, 'yoganga anushtanat ashuddhikshaye jnana deeptihi aaviveka khyateh.' By the sustained practice of the limbs of yoga, upon the destruction of impurities, there arises the light of knowledge into discriminative wisdom, viveka khyati.

What is yoga? It is a philosophy, one among the six philosophies. Yoga is a philosophy, and is also the goal, and how to achieve that goal? There is a technique, a means, and yoga is also the means to achieve this goal. The simplest meaning of yoga is union, union of body and soul, union of our individual consciousness with cosmic consciousness, or union of microcosm with

macrocosm. The goal is freedom from pain, and the union is union with God, fullness, or supreme bliss.

Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root word yuj. Yuj means to unite, to join, or to merge. In the twenty ninth sutra of the second book by sage Patanjali, there are eight limbs of yoga yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. What does it mean? Yama niyama, is self-discipline, vows of observances; asana is physical postures; pranayama is regulation of breath; pratyahara is self-withdrawal, dharana is concentration; dhyana is meditation, and samadhi is realization. These are the eight constituent limbs of yoga.

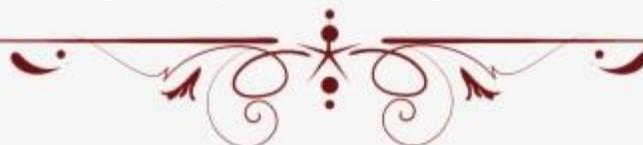
We will explore how each limb of yoga systematically addresses the pain lying in these three layers slowly at the physical, mental and causal levels. Physical purity, shaucha is part of niyama, physical posture is asana and breath regulation and breath control are pranayama, bringing balance and health to the body. So, this takes care of our physical suffering. Eighty-four types of asana or physical postures have been prescribed by the sages to take care of all parts of the body, imparting good physical health. For example, sarvanga asana, pashchima uttana padasana, and so on. One only needs to practice a few regularly to maintain a healthy body.

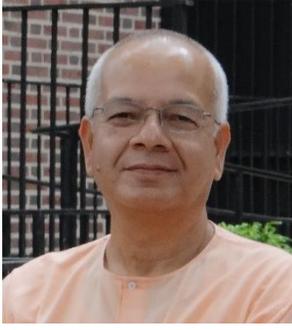
Almost all aspects of yoga practice purify and bring calmness and balance to the mind. Specifically, pranayama or special breathing techniques, concentration techniques like shambhavi mudra, or trataka and meditation on form or formless, makes a person free from psychological sufferings like stress, anxiety, depression, and restlessness of mind. The most important aspect is that by the systematic and steady practice of yoga, there arises discriminative knowledge within, thereby removing the ignorance of not knowing our divine nature, and it takes one to the state of realization of the highest experience of oneness with the supreme power.

This is called realization of truth. Sage Patanjali says in the second book, second sutra 'sa hi kriya yogah samadhi bhavanarthah klesha tanu karanarthah cha', practice of yoga removes afflictions and brings realization of truth.

So, why do we practice kriya, or yoga? For two reasons, to remove afflictions from body and mind and attain self-realization. Here the sage mentions that suffering will continue to manifest as long as the causal suffering is not addressed. We can remove the sufferings at the mental and physical levels with some effort, but if we do not pay attention to the causal or spiritual suffering, then all sufferings will continue, and we are born and reborn again and again. Freedom is attained by removing nescience or avidya through right knowledge. Right knowledge or discriminative knowledge spontaneously arises when the mind is purified through the practice of the eight limbs of yoga. It is integrated into the practice of kriya yoga. This is an integrated and holistic approach, which simultaneously addresses well-being of the body, mind and spirit. Sage Patanjali defined this integrated method as Kriya Yoga. In the first sutra of the second book, 'tapah svadhyaya ishvarapraNidhanani kriya yogah,' means kriya yoga is the integration of tapah, discipline of body and mind, svadhyaya, self-enquiry and surrender to God.

Through this practice one attenuates and diffuses the afflictions in the body and mind, and finally experiences the state of completeness, fullness, or God and self-realization, which is called samadhi. In modern times yoga is recommended by many doctors along with their treatment and therapy. We can use this ancient science of healing to bring good health, peace of mind, and experience our real nature as divinity. Thank you all! I am praying for the well-being of everyone in this entire creation. May all become healthy and happy, noble and compassionate. May there be no suffering or sorrow, may there be more love, peace and harmony in this entire creation.





Compassion in Hindu Philosophy: A Vedantic View

Swami Kripamayananda
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Compassion is the feeling of the heart for the suffering of others. It motivates one to help others to alleviate their suffering. Compassion is in every human being and is considered a spiritual quality by every philosophy and every religion.

Why do we feel compassionate towards others? Why are the kind hearted good people empathetic towards others? How much should one have compassion? With what attitude should compassion be expressed?

Vedanta delves deeply into these questions. According to Vedanta, the reason for having active compassion for others is because, in reality, there is no other. There is only one reality, one self which appears as I, you, he, she, it etc.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad (4.3) says: *tvam strī tvam pumānasi tvam kumāra uta vā kumārī, tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvam jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ.*

"You have become all- the man, the woman, the girl, the boy and the old man trotting with a stick. You have become all these."

That is the indication that every being, whether living or nonliving, is just your reflection. It is you alone that appears as so many things. This is the stand of Vedanta. And, naturally, one cannot but love the Self. No one loves others because they are others. All love of others is because of the Self, says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2.4.5)

*na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvām priyam bhavati,
ātmanastu kāmāya sarvām priyam bhavati*

"You love all because you see the Self in all."

Wherever there is love, wherever there is kindness, affection and service, there, somehow knowingly or unknowingly, we see our own self. The root cause of this compassion and trying to remove all the suffering of others is seeing the Self or oneself in that being. That is approaching

towards the truth. The more we reach the truth the more we become loving to all.

Hindu philosophy believes in the reincarnation of the soul and degeneration of the body after a certain length of time called the life-span.

We know, 'Dhanāni jeevitam caiva parārthe prājña utsrujet'. 'As this body is certain to die and get destroyed, the wise offer their life and wealth for the good of others.'

So, when opportunity arises you want to help others even by sacrificing yourself. You should feel privileged to do so because instead of simply moving towards inevitable death, the body is being utilized for some good cause. That is what the scriptures and Vedanta try to explain.

Don't stand back when there is opportunity to serve others. People give blood, people give their organs, money etc. Someone recently gave his liver to a small baby. All this comes through the feeling that this body is ultimately going to be destroyed so let it be utilized for some good cause. The person performed the act of Vedanta by sharing the organ of the body, which is going to degenerate after some years.

So this gift is the Vedantic feeling of true compassion.

From this Vedantic feeling alone sages like Dadhici gave his life willingly and also Buddha, Shankara and Vivekananda were ready to give up their lives for the sake of others.

It is said-

Dhanāni jeevitam caiva parārthe prājña utsrujet

"The wise, for the sake of good of others, sacrifice this life and also give away their wealth.' "Those who do that are 'prājña' or wise.' It implies that who do not do so are fools.

Sri Krishna says in Chapter 3, Verse 13 of the

Bhagavad Gita:

bhuñjate te tvagharṁ pāpā ye pacantyātma-kāraṇāt
"If you cook only for yourself, you eat only sin." If we are selfish we become bound and miserable. We can truly happy only by making others happy.

The meaning of compassion as 'helping others to remove their suffering' should not be understood as only having pity on an underprivileged person. One must help him or her with respect, dignity and with a feeling of gratitude for being allowed to be of service

During one of his lectures Swami Vivekananda said, "Do not stand on a high pedestal and take 5 cents in your hand and say, 'here, my poor man', but be grateful that the poor man is there, so by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect."

That should be the attitude of how to practice compassion. Is compassion an emotional weakness or is it an expression of spiritual strength and mental purity? Chapter 16 of the Gita lists 'dayâ

bhûteshu', 'compassion to all beings' as one of the twenty-six spiritual qualities. A great Bhakti movement of Vedanta has identified compassion towards all beings as one of the three main qualities for spiritual progress.

Because of the feeling of compassion people donate in charity, people dedicate their lives selflessly for the sick and poor. Because of compassion, great charitable and religious organizations are formed 'for the good of many, for the happiness of many' (*Bahujana Hitâya, Bahujana Sukhâya*).

Filled with the compassion for all, Swami Vivekananda made the motto of the Ramakrishna Mission as '*Âtmano Mokshârtham, Jagat Hitâya ca*' The very formation of the Ramakrishna Mission is out of true compassion for the whole of humanity, through identification and unification and through integration of humanity. That is the journey from the unreal to the real, from death to immortality and from darkness to light.

True compassion, true empathy and true feeling for others is the way for progress to the Reality, to our own Spiritual Enlightenment.



"If you wish to be a true reformer, three things are necessary. The first is to feel. Do you really feel for your brothers? Do you really feel that there is so much misery in the world, so much ignorance and superstition? Do you really feel that men are your brothers? Does this idea come into your whole being? Does it run with your blood? Does it tingle in your veins? Does it course through every nerve and filament of your body? Are you full of that idea of sympathy? If you are, that is only the first step. You must think next if you have found any remedy."

-- Swami Vivekananda

Jyotish: A Unique Way of Healing

Brahmacharini Jagaddhatri

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*om bhūr bhuvah svaḥ, tat savitur vareṇyam
bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt.*

OM we meditate on that spiritual splendor of that supreme and divine reality source of physical, astral and celestial spheres of existence may that Divine Being supreme illumine our intellect.

Good morning.

Today I am going to highlight a few points of this vast subject of Jyotish and how can it help us for healing.

The word Jyotish is composed of: *Jyoti* and *isha*. *Jyoti* is 'light' and *isha* means 'about it'. Therefore, it is a study of the light. One may ask: What type of light? Primarily, celestial lights from celestial bodies— sun, moon and all external physical lights. The study of the lights from astral bodies is astrology. However, in a deeper philosophical sense it is the internal light – light of the Self.

Jyotish is known as Vedanga – an auxiliary discipline of the Vedas and it is also called the third eye of the Vedas.

Around eighth to sixth century BC a few citations on this subject are found. It is specifically mentioned in the Mandukya Upanishad that there are two types of knowledge – *para* and *apara*. *Para* is related to the ultimate Truth, while *apara* is the cultivation of secular knowledge. All the Vedas and their auxiliary disciplines fall under the second category. Through the practices of these secondary types of knowledge, for example, by understanding and performing the rituals one attains the absolute knowledge.

Now to perform these rituals and Vedic *yajnas* perfectly, calculation of time was necessary. At the time of the Vedas the calculation was mainly done by observing the movement of the Sun and it is called the sundial calculation.

People of that time also observed the movement

of the constellations and sidereal calculations of time were also added. This was finer and a special addition in the field of time calculation. So, apparently jyotish was initially a study of astronomy and time keeping.

In 326 BC, when Alexander invaded India, along with him came the Greek concept of predictive astrology, which got mixed with astronomy of ancient India. After so many ages it is difficult to figure out what was the unadulterated original form of Vedanga Jyotish, how much was predictive astrology, what portion of astronomical calculations remained etc.. At present Jyotish covers both astronomy and astrology.

Now let us come to our topic, how it can help us with healing. To get healed it is necessary to know what is causing the suffering. As Swami Tyaganandaji already mentioned, there are three types of sufferings. One is due to our own self, which is causing anger, frustrations and the like; second is the suffering caused by the celestial bodies, for example, planets and gods and goddesses; and, the third one is from other physical entities, which are called the *bhutas*, like virus etc., like the troubles we are facing now.

Regarding healing -- at the outset, one should remember the famous saying of the Panchatantra, *mantra tīrthe dvije deve daivajñe bheṣaje gurau, yādṛśī bhāvanā yasya siddhir bhavati tādṛśī.*

In mantras, in visiting the places pilgrimage, in the wise people, in gods, in astrologers, in medicines and in spiritual teachers, whatever attitude one has in these matters the results of attainment will be accordingly.

At the physical level when we think about using astrology as a tool to cure suffering three things are to be considered: *mani, mantra and aushadhi*. Aushadhis are the plant-based medicines and are related to Ayurveda. Ayurveda and Jyotish are

therefore called “sister” sciences. Kaviraj or the doctors in ayurveda first find out the constitution of the body of the sufferer’s. To investigate this s/he also pays attention to the stars and planets that are influencing that particular body and governing the sufferers nature. Then, along with the aushadhi, he can suggest a *mani*.. The word *mani* can have two meanings: one is gems and the other one is *manipura* or navel chakra. When we talk about the gems – each planet is related with a gem and to make a malefic planet “happy” a gem of that planet’s “liking” can be used. For example, Saturn is supported by sapphire and so on.

When *manipura chakra* is taken into account, the *vaishwanara agni* or the digestive fire is meant. So by offering the right type of medicine and food oblation to this fire improve one’s physical system. So, *mani* is related to body-mind complex and heals both.

Finally *mantra*. Each planet is considered to be controlled by a god or goddess, who are believed to be pleased with particular prayers meant for each of them and by the chanting of mantra. Therefore, this concept of pleasing can help one to feel better physically and uplifted spiritually. These are, in a nutshell, the three aspects of suffering and the ways to heal from them.

The study of astrology sets a connection between micro and macrocosm also. As Swami Vivekananda said, “*From the macrocosm the question was reflected back to the microcosm; from the external world the question was reflected to the internal. From analysing the external nature, man is led to analyse the internal; this questioning of the internal man comes with a higher state of civilisation, with a deeper insight into nature, with a higher state of growth.*”

When we look at the cosmic level we shall see the *virata purusha* or the cosmic person. He is also called *kaala purusha*. The word *kaala purusha* is made of two words – *kaala* means time and

purusha is the Divine entity who is standing there eternally. Its physical representation is the Orion. All the zodiacs are moving around him – the Aries is on his head, Taurus is his face and in this manner all the way going down to his body Pisces are assigned at his feet.

Internally as well, different planets are assigned to each of his organs. For example, the sun is his soul, moon is his mind and so on. In this way the whole cosmic system is represented. It is amazing to see how astrologers of ancient times connected the human body with the *Virata*. Let’s explain this a little more with gross phenomena. We know the high and low tides occur due to force of attraction of the moon. Also, a debilitated or a strong moon in one’s horoscope shows the ups and downs of the mind of that person and whether s/he will be suffering from mind-related issues or not. This connection helps with understanding the overall nature of the mind and its sufferings.

In the beginning it was mentioned that for the Vedic *karma kanda* or ritual worship, astronomical calculations were needed. Gradually, with the help of astrology, the effects of a person’s past actions or *karma* or the cause of suffering started to be predicted.

In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna said how the journey of the soul is affected by external nature. He said if a soul departs a body during the waxing period of moon it would reach brighter levels and so on.

Therefore, it can be concluded if one cultivates this subject more and dive deeper, then starting from the lights of agni or fire, moon, sun, one can attain the light of the Self. Thus we can return to our prayer that was uttered at the beginning.

May the divine reality of physical, astral and celestial spheres of existence illumine our intellect, which in turn will illumine our inner self and that will be the ultimate healing of our all sufferings.

*All these articles are based on the talks delivered at Hinduism Panel discussion on October 17, 2021 at the Parliament of World’s Religions 2021 (Virtual).
The panel was conducted by Swami Ishatmananda, Trustee, PoWR.*

BHAGAVATA (11): SRI KRISHNA: AS UDDHAVA SAW HIM

Swami Ishatmananda

Students of the Bhagavata know that the great King, Parikshit, was listening to the spiritual teachings of Sukadeva. Three days had past and only another four days of his life were left. He was cursed to die on the 7th day by Shringi, the son of Rishi Shamik.

Parikshit was saved in his mother's womb from Ashwathamā's weapon by Sri Krishna. Since then, King Parikshit used to have the vision of that image of Krishna. Now, on the verge of death, he wanted to hear about Sri Krishna, so with great humility he said to Shuka Deva (10-1-1&2). *"O venerable Sir, I am eager to hear about that holy soul who was born as Krishna along with Balaram in the clan of the Yadavas."*

Parikshit's prayer introduces an excellent conception of Hinduism. One all-pervading Consciousness, without form and without any attributes, created this world and took human birth.

Acharya Shankara in the beginning of his explanation of the Gita said, *"God, after the creation of this universe, and desiring to ensure its stability, first created the Prajapatis (Masters) and made them follow the Dharma, prescribed by the Vedas."*

These seven sages are: *Marichi, Angirā, Atri, Pulasta, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasistha*. Brahma created them with the power to compose Mantras and Gotras. They all possessed very special powers.

To keep the balance the Supreme God created Seven Rishis endowed with spiritual knowledge and supreme dispassion. They are: *Nara, Sanat, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Sanātana and Kapila*. (Mahabharata, Shānti, 341).

According to the Vedas, *dharma* has two parts *Pravritti* and *Nirvritti*: Desire and Detachment. But over a long period of time the moral/spiritual tendencies were subdued by the strong worldly desires. To save the creation, the eternal Lord Vishnu, also known as Narayana, took birth as Krishna in the family of Devaki and Vasudeva.

The philosopher, Spinoza, wrote in a letter to Oldenburg, *"It is not absolutely necessary to know Christ according to the flesh; but it is very different when we speak of that Son of God, that is to say, that eternal wisdom manifested in all things, and yet more fully manifested in the human soul, and far above all in Jesus Christ."*

Parikshit requested Sukadeva to tell about Sri Krishna God incarnated in human form (3/1/44).

According to Vidura, the embodiment and works of the Unborn and the Actionless are only for the destruction of the evil and the protection of the world.

In the 3rd book, 2nd chapter, 15th verse there is a description of the Cause (Parā), Effect (Alara) and Lord (Isha) as observed in:

His lower creation;

His good and mild creation;

His persecuting creation.

When the lower creation is persecuting His higher creation, the Lord Himself takes form through His Maya to save them. *"Aja api jāta Bhagavan."*

Uddhava was a very close friend of Krishna and a minister in the court of Dwarka. He obtained the highest knowledge of Moksha through the grace of Sri Krishna.

When Vidura wanted to know about Krishna and other Yadavas from Uddhava, Uddhava's first reaction was silence with horripulation all over the body and with tears flowing from his half-opened eyes. These are the signs of love for God.

Uddhava then slowly came back to human consciousness. He said to Vidura that the Yadavas were so close to the Supreme Being, Krishna, but unfortunately could not understand Him (3/2/7).

Uddhava, the great devotee of Krishna, loved Krishna so much that a little trouble to Krishna was unbearable to him. Uddhava said, *"This gives me pain."* What? *"When I see the Omnipotent Unborn Lord, being all powerful, taking birth in a prison as the son of Vasudeva, fleeing in fear, living in Vraja — all these give me pain."*

This was tremendous love, pure love, like the love of the mother saving her baby from rain by bending over the child.

"I feel pain, O Vidura, when I see the creator of all paying obeisance to Vasudeva and Devaki and apologizing, "O Father! O Mother! Owing to fear of Kamsa we have been forced to be ungrateful to you by not doing our duties."

Why did Uddhava feel pain when Krishna apologized to his parents? Because he knew that there is none equal to or greater than Him. He is the Master of Consciousness, Maya and Beings (3/2/21).

BHAGAVATA (12): CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

Swami Ishatmananda

The Bhāgavata, a very famous and popular scripture of the Hindus, very clearly states that the Supreme Being, desirous to become many, divided Himself into three parts. The three parts of the Lord are Divine, Human and Matter.

Then the Supreme Lord, manifesting in the form of Mahā-Vishnu, created Brahma and asked him to create. Brahma, through the spiritual knowledge and power given to him by the Supreme Lord, created by dividing himself into two parts Swayambhu Manu and Shatarupa. (3/12/53).

The 3rd book, 22nd chapter, 15 & 16 verses of the Bhagavata describe the first marriage in the world, which was held between the famous ascetic, Kardama, and Devahuti, the daughter of Swayambhu Manu and Shatarupa.

The Hindus believe that this creation has been divided into four time zones (Satya Yuga, Tretā Yuga, Dwāpara Yuga and Kali Yuga), so to say. In every Yuga or time zone, the thinking processes, mentality, and behavior of humans changes.

Now we are discussing the mind-set of the Satya Yuga. Everyone was highly spiritual. Almost every one of them was aware of the nature of Para Prakriti—the true nature of the Supreme Being and Aparā Prakriti, His created phenomena, which is nothing but illusion.

Brahma, the First Born, performed his duty, but immediately after creation, the created beings wanted to go back to their source — the Supreme Being. Brahma had a very hard time persuading Kardama to marry Devahuti, and the Muni humbly refused. Ultimately, Mahā-Vishnu intervened and told Kardama Muni that He would take birth as his son to spread the knowledge of Atman.

Kardama, a great ascetic, had been commissioned by his father, Brahma, to propagate the species in those early days of the world. Kardama obeyed his father's command, but he always felt a strong urge to go back to the forest and practice austerities to realize Brahman.

Once, Kardama expressed his desire to renounce. Then Devahuti reminded him of his duties and Kardama remembered the Lord's promise to be born as his son.

Devahuti lamented, "O Great One! If you go away like this now, your daughters will suffer. Again, if you go away, there will be none to give me spiritual instruction to overcome Samsara." (3/23/52)

Then the muni said to her, "O Lady of royal descent! Don't think of yourself as a helpless woman. The Lord, Maha-Vishnu will soon be born in your womb as your son." (3/24/2)

Kardama then instructed his wife to practice austerities to receive the Purest of the Pure, the Lord of all beings, as her son.

Maitreya said, "Devahuti took Kardama Prajapati's instruction very seriously and began to adore the Supreme Person, Mahā-Vishnu, who is eternal and the teacher of all, with absolute faith.

One day, Brahma, the knower of all, realized that the great Lord, Mahā-Vishnu had incarnated as Kardama's son for the propagation of the philosophy of knowledge (Samkhya). Accompanied by Marichi and other Rishis, he went to the ashrama of Kardama on the bank of the Saraswati River.

Addressing his son, Kardama, Brahma said, "I know that the Lord has through His Māyā incarnated Himself as you son, who will prove to be a treasure for the whole world. (3/24/16): "A leader among men of realization and a recognized authority of philosophy, he will be known in the world as Kapila, and through his fame he will make you famous." (3/24/19)

Here we find that Kardama, being himself a realized soul, understood the real nature of God, who had taken birth as his son. One day he secretly worshipped his own son, Kapila, saying, "O Lord! Thou art the one for whose realization yogis meditate for long periods. You have been born as my son in our unworthy family only to spread the philosophy of knowledge. O Lord! The people who seek spiritual illumination know that you are glorious in Lordship, Detachment, Fame, Knowledge, Powers and Auspiciousness. I humbly request you to grant me a favor. I desire to take up the life of a monk." (3/24/27-34)

Now Rishi Maitraya narrated to Vidura that after his father's departure to the forest, Bhagavān Kapila, in order to please his mother, continued to stay in that hermitage on the banks of the Bindusaras. But he was not practicing any ritualistic karma, being a teacher of truth.

One day Devahuti, his mother said to her son, "O Lord, I know you are that one who can cut the bondage of Maya. Please bestow your grace on me through the knowledge of Prakriti and Purusha. Enlighten me about prakriti and purusha. I salute the greatest among knowers of truth." (3/25/11).

Introduction to the Cover Page: Facets of Faith

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Let us begin with one of the most ancient yet important sayings of all times in the human civilization, *Ekam Sat*, the Truth is One. The word *sad* stands for "Is". This "is"-ness is *âstikya* or faith in the expression of Sage Patanjali. In Sri Ramakrishna's realization it is, "As many faiths, so many paths."

In Sanskrit faith is called *viśvāsa*, which stands for trust, confidence, and credibility. In general faith is complete trust or confidence in someone or some object.

Faith and insight are similar in nature. Faith dwells in the spiritual, intellectual mind. It is developed through many superconscious insights blended together through cognition, not necessarily through reason. As the intellect is built upon experiences of gross reasoning faculties, all or a part of it might be forgotten or may become confusing unless it is that experience of the ultimate Truth. On the other hand, the insights may not be remembered, because they are firmly impressed as *samskaras* within the inner mind.

Though faith is basically the intellect of the soul at its various stages of unfoldment, yet the intellect in its capacity to contain truth is a very limited tool, while faith is a very broad, accommodating and embracing faculty. The mystery of life and beyond life is really better understood through faith than through intellectual reasoning.

Faith is an expression of intellect or mind. Swami Vivekananda said mind is *māyā* or delusion, and illusion itself. Therefore, to attain faith is not easy overcoming this illusion, *bhrama* or doubts, *samshaya*. Swami Vivekananda prayed to Sri Ramakrishna, *Samśaya rākshasa nāśa-mahāstram yāmi gurum śaraṇam bhava-vaidyam* -- I surrender

myself to my Guru, the physician for the malady of Samsara (relative existence) who is, as it were, the great weapon to destroy the demon of doubt.

Sri Ramakrishna says, "you must remember, unless one is guileless and broad-minded, one cannot have such faith". What type of faith? Not the egocentric faith of an ignorant person but faith with knowledge: 'O God, Thou art the Doer and not I'. ... The jnanis follow the path of discrimination. Sometimes it happens that, discriminating between the Real and the unreal, a man loses his faith in the existence of God."

Sri Ramakrishna knew, "The truth is that ordinary men cannot easily have faith. But an *Isvarakoti's* faith is spontaneous. *Prahlada* burst into tears while writing the letter 'k'. It reminded him of Krishna. It is the nature of *jivas* to doubt. They say yes, no doubt, but Sri Ramakrishna observed that the faith of the worldly-minded lasts as long as a drop of water on a red-hot frying-pan. His advice is, "You must be firm in one ideal. Dive deep. Otherwise you cannot get the gems at the bottom of the ocean. You cannot pick up the gems if you only float on the surface." How strongly he said, "Worthless people do not have any faith. They always doubt."! He said again and again, "Nothing whatsoever is achieved by the performance of worship, japa, and devotions, without faith."

But is it possible for householders to hold onto such a strong faith in day-to-day life? Sri Ramakrishna says, "Through His grace even the impossible becomes possible. ... It is written in the books of the *Vaishnavas*: 'God can be attained through faith alone; reasoning pushes Him far away.' Faith alone!" He taught one of his householder disciples: "You can lead an unattached life to a great extent if you have faith in God and love for Him."

Attainment of this requires the practice of faith.

Let us look at a few examples provided by Sri Ramakrishna. In business: When the customers asked a weaver how much should they pay for a cloth, he would answer : *'By the will of Rama the price of the yarn is one rupee and the labour four annas; by the will of Rama the profit is two annas . The price of the cloth, by the will of Rama, is one rupee and six annas.'* Such was the people's faith in the weaver that the customer would at once pay the price and take the cloth.

In well-being: Bhavanath, a young disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, smilingly pointed out that the Master had great faith in medicine, but they did not have as much faith; right away the Master replied: *"It is God who, as the doctor, prescribes the medicine. It is He who, in one form, has become the physician. Dr. Gangaprasad asked me not to drink water at night. I regarded his statement as the words of the Vedas. I look upon him as the physician of heaven."*

On another occasion he said, *"It is God Himself who has become the physicians. Therefore one must believe all of them. But one cannot have faith in them if one thinks of them as mere men."*

In relationship: Sri Ramakrishna did not hesitate to share his conversation with some women devotee. *"The women then asked me if they would have salvation. 'Yes,' I said, 'if you are absolutely faithful to one man and look on him as your God. But you cannot be liberated if you live with five men.' "*

The third example can be interpreted in many ways – beginning from control of lustful desires, to chastity to one-pointed love for the chosen ideal. He mentioned that the gopis were faithful to Krishna of Vrindavan who wore a yellow robe and a bewitching crest of peacock feathers. When they saw him in the royal court at Mathura, where Krishna was seated as king, the gopis bent down their heads and did not see him further.

Tulasidas prayed in the Ramacharit Manas:

*bhavāni śamkarau vande śraddhā viśvāsa rūpīṇam
yābhyām vinā na paśyanti siddha svantasthamīśvaram.*
We pray to the Goddess Bhavāni and God Shankar -- They are *śraddhā viśvāsa rūpīṇam*, embodiment of faith, *śraddhā* (Bhavāni) and *viśvāsa* (Shiva).

Without which, no one, not even an accomplished one, *siddha*, can have a vision of the indwelling divinity.

To attain the Indwelling Divinity is the goal. *"Let me tell you another thing. Don't be over-fastidious about outward purity"* -- Sri Ramakrishna alerts us and provides us with a prescription to attain internal purity or pure love for God step by step: *"First, the company of holy men. That awakens sraddha, faith in God. Then comes nishtha, single-minded devotion to the Ideal. In that stage the devotee does not like to hear anything but talk about God. He performs only those acts that please God. After nishtha comes bhakti, devotion to God; then comes bhava. Next mahabhava, then prema, and last of all the attainment of God Himself."* Clearly, *"The most important thing is faith. As is a man's meditation, so is his feeling of love; As is a man's feeling of love, so is his gain; And faith is the root of all. If one has faith one has nothing to fear."*

There are two kinds of faith. The first kind is faith in those masters, adepts, sages who have had similar experiences and have spoken about them directly – an unedited version. The second type is faith in one's own spiritual, unsought-for, unbidden flashes of intuition, revelations or visions, which one remembers stronger than something heard from a philosopher. These personal revelations create a new, superconscious intellect when verified by what sages have seen and heard and whose explanations centuries have preserved. These are as if building a new intellect from superconscious insights. Once the mind becomes pure one arrives at this stage of the evolution of the soul.

There is an old saying, "Seeing is believing." For a spiritual aspirant "Believing is seeing." The scientists and the educators of today see with their two eyes and pass judgments based on what they currently believe. The sages of all times and different countries also are seers of Truth. This seeing is not with the two eyes – this seeing cannot be erased through argument. The seer relates his seeing to the soul of the one who hears. That is how a faith-based system *guru-śishya parampara*

gets developed.

In this system, faith is necessary in the words of Guru, in mantra, in teachings of the holy scriptures, in God and most importantly in one's own self. Swami Vivekananda pondered on "*Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God — this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all ... of your mythological gods... and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you*".

Next comes the faith in the Guru. Sri Ramakrishna said, "*a man must have faith in the guru's words. He succeeds in spiritual life by looking on his guru as God Himself.*" The Master continues: "*Faith! Faith! Faith! Once a guru said to his pupil, 'Rama alone has become everything.' When a dog began to eat the pupil's bread, he said to it: 'O Rama, wait a little. I shall butter Your bread.'* Such was his faith in the words of his guru.

Having faith in one's guru means to have faith in his teachings and sayings. Even if the Guru is not present physically, by following his teachings faithfully one attains the goal. Sri Ramakrishna gives the example of Ekalavya. His conclusion, "*It is Satchidananda that comes to us in the form of the guru. If a man is initiated by a human guru, he will not achieve anything if he regards his guru as a mere man. The guru should be regarded as the direct manifestation of God. Only then can the disciple have faith in the mantra given by the guru. Once a man has faith he, achieves all.*"

The Master tells a story. Once a guru said to his disciple -- it is God who exists in all beings. The disciple was a man of great faith. He not only just believed it but acted accordingly. *One day a dog snatched a piece of bread from him and started to run away. He ran after the dog, with a jar of butter in his hand, and cried again and again: 'O Rama, stand still a minute. That bread hasn't been buttered.'*

Sri Ramakrishna makes it clear, "*A man should have faith in the words of his guru. He doesn't have to look into his guru's character. 'Though my guru visits the grog-shop, still he is the Embodiment of Eternal Bliss.'*

One day a Tantrik was visiting Dakshineswar

and M, the Gospel writer, happen to be there. For a tantra practitioner the two most important tools are mantra and yantra. An essential part of mantra is the *beeja*. In the afternoon M. found the Master was engaged in conversation with that Tantrik. Seeing M, Sri Ramakrishna asked him to sit by his side. The Master asked the Tantrik devotee, "*Can a man attain perfection without the help of a vija mantra, a sacred word from the guru?*" The tantrik replied, "*Yes, he can if he has faith -- faith in the words of the guru.*" turned to M. and drawing M's attention, repeated "Faith! "

Another scene at Dakshineswar. A young man of twenty-seven or twenty-eight, who had a spirit of renunciation and was practicing spiritual discipline at home came to visit the Master. He said, "*I pray to God. But why do I suffer now and then from worries? For a few days I feel very happy. Why do I feel restless afterwards?*" The Master right away diagnosed the disease. He told the young man, "*I see. Things have not been fitted quite exactly. The machine works smoothly if the mechanic fits the cogs of the wheels correctly. In your case there is an obstruction somewhere. ... Are you initiated?*" As soon as an affirmative answer came from the young man, Sri Ramakrishna asked the key question, "*Do you have faith in your mantra?*"

One day when the Master was gradually coming down from the plane of samadhi and his mind was still filled with the consciousness of the Divine Mother, he was speaking to Her like a small child. M writes, *the voice in which these words were uttered was very touching.* Sri Ramakrishna was telling: "*Mother, one needs faith. Away with this wretched reasoning! Let it be blighted! One needs faith-faith in the words of the guru, childlike faith. ... But why should I blame them, Mother? What can they do? It is necessary to go through reasoning once. Didn't You see how much I told him about it the other day? But it all proved useless.*"

Later the Master said, "*In the beginning of spiritual life one goes by a roundabout way. One has to suffer a great deal. But the path becomes very easy when ecstatic love is awakened in the heart. It is like going*

over the paddy-field after the harvest is over. You may then walk in any direction. Before the harvest you had to go along the winding balk, but now you can walk in any direction. There may be stubble in the field, but you will not be hurt by it if you walk with your shoes on. Just so, an aspirant does not suffer if he has discrimination, dispassion, and faith in the guru's words."

To begin with, "A man must have some kind of faith before he undertakes a work. Further, he feels joy when he thinks of it. Only then does he set about performing the work. Suppose a jar of gold coins is hidden underground. First of all a man must have faith that the jar of gold coins is there. He feels joy at the thought of the jar. Then he begins to dig. As he removes the earth he hears a metallic sound. That increases his joy and inspire the seeker to go forward.

Faith in the Guru's word and the repetition of mantra can be good starting point but a lifelong spiritual practice is necessary. "A man thinks of God, no doubt, but he has no faith in Him. Again and again he forgets God and becomes attached to the world. It is like giving the elephant a bath; afterwards he covers his body with mud and dirt again. 'The mind is a mad elephant.' But if you can make the elephant go into the stable immediately after bathing him, then he stays clean. So Sri Ramakrishna teaches a trick: A man must prepare the way beforehand, so that he may think of God in the hour of death. The way lies through constant practice. At the end there remains no more possibility of this pure mind to have worldly thought.

The business of faith is all about mind. The Master gave the example of the Kartabhaja sect. In their system "the teacher, while giving initiation, says to the disciple, 'Now everything depends on your mind.' According to this sect, 'He who has the right mind find the right way and also achieves the right end.' It was through the power of his mind that Hanuman leapt over the sea. 'I am the servant of Rama; I have repeated the holy name of Rama. Is there anything impossible for me?' that was Hanuman's faith.

According to Sri Ramakrishna: "Faith in the guru's words. One attains God by following the guru's

instructions step by step. It is like reaching an object by following the trail of a thread." Guru's words take us away from all types of illusions. Let us imagine as if in a dark forest, suddenly rays of light are found coming from a house far away. The source of light is not known – maybe it is from jewel that has been and will be there all the time, or it may just be from an ordinary light-source which will shut down as soon as it runs out of fuel. It is somewhat similar to the lighted room we see on our cover page. Now only an "experienced" one can guide us rightly. This seeing, and hearing the wise one are also, no doubt, illusion; but following these directions there is a possibility of attaining the eternal light – to go beyond the darkness and any illusion. The Panchadashi talked about two types of illusions *Samvādi* and *Visamvādi bhrama*. Faith in the Guru's words takes us to having faith in God. The worship of God with attributes, *Saguna*, leads to an illusion in as much as the devotee mistakes physical or mental images for the formless God. Both are *Samvādi bhrama* that finally leads to the realization of *Nirguna Brahman*. The endless pursuit of sense-objects can shed a temporary light of joy and it is, therefore, the *Visamvādi bhrama*.

For some time faith and doubt go side by side. One day the Master asked his devotee Ishan, "Tell me if you have any more doubts." Interestingly Ishan answered, "You said everything when you spoke of faith." As soon as one has total faith there will be no doubt at all. Sri Ramakrishna shared many of his personal experiences. Sometimes he questioned himself, if it is a right thing to do. He himself answered, "Why should there be any harm in it? I have told these things to create faith in you all." He was so serious about creating faith in his devotees.

The Master often used to sing: "As is a man's meditation, so is his feeling of love; As is a man's feeling of love, so is his gain; And faith is the root of all."

As purity of the mind is necessary to hold onto the faith Sri Ramakrishna taught, "Chant His name and purify your body and mind. Purify your tongue by singing God's holy name."

With faith in God's name, Ramprasad, a Shakta poet and saint of eighteenth century, sang: *Sow for your seed the holy name Of God that your guru has given to you, faithfully watering it with love.* And, Sri Ramakrishna said, *"Have faith in the name of God. Then you won't need even to go to holy places."* He repeatedly said to all the spiritual aspirants to give up knowledge and reasoning; accept bhakti. Bhakti alone is the essence. ... *"Have faith. Depend on God. Then you will not have to do anything yourself. Mother Kali will do everything for you"*.

Faith in God strengthens faith in one's own small self, by the help of which one attains the big Self. The devotee with *tamasic bhakti* shouts like a madman. He has great strength of mind and burning faith. A Shiva devotee would say, *"Hara! Hara! Vyom! Vyom!"* A Shakta says: *'Victory to Kali! What? I have uttered once the name of Kali and of Durga! Can there be any sin in me?'* A Ramayet would say, *"I have uttered once the name of Rama! how can I be a sinner?"*

Sri Ramakrishna encouraged people to have faith in all forms of God as well as in His formlessness. *"Let me ask you not to disbelieve in the forms of God. Have faith in God's forms. Meditate on that form of God which appeals to your mind. After name comes form. ... Whichever attitude you adopt, you will certainly realize God if you have firm faith. You may believe in God with form or in God without form, but your faith must be sincere and whole-hearted. ... Through faith alone one attains everything. I used to say, 'I shall take all this to be true if I meet a certain person or if a certain officer of the temple garden talks to me.' What I would think of would invariably come to pass."*

With a childlike faith one sees everything throbbing with consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna tells the story of Shibu, a lad of four or five years. *When the clouds rumbled and lightning flashed, Shibu would say to me: 'There, uncle! They are striking matches again!' (All laugh) One day I noticed him chasing grasshoppers by himself. The leaves rustled in the near-by trees. 'Hush! Hush!' he said to the leaves. 'I want to catch the grasshoppers.'*

Sankaracharya was a Brahmajnani, to be sure. He also had to go through a lesson to feel that everything is filled with Consciousness, and learn to develop absolute faith that everything in the world is Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna tells the story of how an untouchable butcher reminded Shankaracharya, *'I have not touched you, nor have you touched me. The Pure Self cannot be the body nor the five elements nor the twenty-four cosmic principles.'*

Yearning and faith complement each other in the path of God realization. *"A devotee who sincerely yearns for God"*, Sri Ramakrishna says, *"does not give up his meditation even though he is invaded by atheistic ideas. A man whose father and grandfather have been farmers continues his farming even though he doesn't get any crop in a year of drought."*

The Master emphasized, *"One must have childlike faith"* along with *"intense yearning that a child feels to see its mother. That yearning is like the red sky in the east at dawn. After such a sky the sun must rise. Immediately after that yearning one sees God."*

However, it is also true that none of these is possible as long as the aspirant is under the realm of *bhrama*, illusion. *Bhrama* means error, mistake, illusion, confusion, perplexity etc. and it literally indicates that which is not steady; it refers to error caused by defects in the perceptive system. The classic examples quoted in Vedantic texts are seeing a snake for a rope, in darkness; silver in nacre, in moonlight; water in a mirage, on a hot day; and a person in the stump of a tree..

The *bhrama* or illusion is not an *āropa*, imposition or willfully caused in spite of falsity. Illusion is there in every level or sheath of our system. And, interestingly one can come out of it at every level.

When it is at the *annamāyā-kosha* or at the level of gross body, Ayurveda sees it as a disease. It explains *bhrama* as, for example, the vertigo caused when the body becomes winded, or when fire and water elements get imbalanced. It is curable.

According to the Yoga philosophy, which fundamentally deals with the mind-stuff, *Anyathā-khyāti* or the theory of misapprehension is associated with *bhrama*. This theory is based on the

premise that illusion is thinking of something as that which it is not, like attributing the characteristics of Prakṛti to Puruṣha and vice versa.

According to Vedānta, illusion is *anartha*, wrongdoings. *Svarūpa-bhrama*, illusion of one's own nature is one of the four major *anarthas* and it is of four kinds – *sva-tattva* (illusion about one's own spiritual identity), *para-tattva* (illusion about the spiritual identity of the supreme absolute truth), *sādhyā-sādhana-tattva* (illusion about the spiritual means and the object gained), and *māyā-tattva* (illusion about the Lord's cosmic manifestation). All these four *anarthas* must be uprooted in order to develop *nishthā*, one-pointed love for God.

Illusion, in Sanskrit, is expressed not only as *māyā*, but also as *bhram(a)*. Considering its importance in our further discussion let's take a brief detour here. This word has profound meaning in connection with our spiritual scriptures and demands a long separate article, the scope for which is not available here. For now, will be enough to remember that *bhrama* means both wandering physically or rambling of mind, confusion. The word *bhrānta* originated from the same root and means error or ignorance. The gods offered salutations in the Durga Saptashati by saying again and again to that Divine Mother "Who in all beings is abiding in the form of *bhrānti*, the perception of objects of multifarious forms or illusion. By adding a prefixes like: ud- or vi- other words like *vibhrānta* (move to and fro) can be formed.

A sweet conversation between Ma Sarada, so far the best expression of the Divine Mother, and her devotee children is a good example how the word *bhrama* is used to mean a devotee's forgetfulness of Divinity and for that reason one has to keep moving back and forth within the frame of mortality. An excerpt from the "Compassionate Mother" by Brahmachari Akshaychaitanya. "One day the Mother was seated in her room with her legs hanging down. With a few lotuses in his hands, Prakash Maharaj entered the room to offer his salutation to her.

Prabodh Babu asked of him a lotus and followed him. After offering the flower at her feet, Prakash Maharaj prayed, "Mother, don't make me ramble about any more." The Mother smilingly replied, "You could forget me and wander about so long, and should I not make you wander a little more?"

Bhramara generally means that which whirls or goes around, or a bee in a specific sense. *Bhrāmara* means whirling or going around. Its feminine form *bhrāmari* indicates the Divine Mother. The *bhrāmari beeja*, a seed mantra of the Divine Mother is well known.

In one of the ancient hymns to the Divine Mother we find: *Sunayana vibhramara-bhramara-bhramara-bhramara-bhramarādhipate*. *Sunayana* is the one with beautiful eyes and *bhramarādhipate* could mean the queen (*adhipati*) of bees (*bhramara*).

According to the Durga Saptashati, the Divine Mother Bhrāmari promised Her children that when the demon Aruna would appear, then She would incarnate as Bhrāmari to kill him.

Mythology says the demon Aruna did tremendous austerity and was blessed with the boon that no two or four-legged creature would kill him. So the Divine Mother incarnated Herself as six-legged bee and killed him. In "Sadhana Samara" Brahmārshi Satyadeva had a spiritual interpretation of Durga Saptashati. Aruna literally means dawn, the period just before sunrise when there's a reddish glow. According to him, similarly just before the attainment of absolute Knowledge, the aspirant gets caught by the *chidābhāsa*, the reflection of Brahman through ego and thinks it is the ultimate bliss. This misunderstanding, like a demon as it were, must at last be killed. The Divine Mother clears that final *bhrama* confusion and establishes her child in the eternal light of Knowledge. Somewhat similar to the light on the cover page – we do not know the source: whether it is *chidābhāsa* or the absolute Truth!!

Both -- doubt and faith -- are the manifestation of the same Divinity. In Sri Ramakrishna's words, "God can be realized by true faith alone. And the realization is hastened if you believe everything about

God. *The cow that picks and chooses its food gives milk only in dribblets, but if she eats all kinds of plants, then her milk flows in torrents.*" It is all Divine Mother alone. She alone appears as *bhrānti*, delusion, as *Bhramarādhipate*, and also *bhrāmari*, the destroyer of all delusion and doubts.

Spiritual scriptures like the Durga Saptashati play an important role in developing faith in an aspirant's heart. Sri Ramakrishna counted it as a blessing. To his devotee Mahendra he said, "*You were already blessed. Your father is also a good man. I saw him the other day. He has faith in the Adhyatma Ramāyāna.*"

But again, we find that the Master is emphasizing, "*How much of the scriptures can you read? What will you gain by mere reasoning? Try to realize God before anything else. Have faith in the guru's words, and work. If you have no guru, then pray to God with a longing heart. He will let you know what He is like.*"

Among all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Chandra Ghosh's faith was exemplary. When that Girish asked Sri Ramakrishna, "*Please bless me, sir.*" The Master himself said, "*Have faith in the Divine Mother and you will attain everything.*"

Swami Vivekananda at the very beginning once argued with Girish, "*How can I believe, without proof, that God incarnates Himself as a man?*" Girish confidently replied, "*Faith alone is sufficient. What is the proof that these objects exist here? Faith alone is the proof.*" Seeing such strong faith, even Swamiji did not contradict him.

Once Sri Ramakrishna's body was not doing well. So he could not give much advice to a distressed soul, though he wanted to. He consoled the devotee by saying, "*Come here again when I am a little better. Some way will be found for you to attain peace of mind, if you have faith in me.*" Sri Ramakrishna noticed, "*Man has no faith in God. That is the reason he suffers so much.*"

If we have "faith" in him, there will be definitely some way out. But the question is: to have faith in "which" Sri Ramakrishna? The Master himself

laughed at the comment of M., when he said about the Master, "*You are simple and at the same time deep. It is extremely difficult to understand you.*"

Now, let us look at faith meant in a different sense of the word -- faith in the sense of belonging to, or professing belief or faith in, or following a religious system or ideology.

Sri Ramakrishna is one of the firsts, if not the first, who thought of the idea of harmony between faiths. Of course the term "interfaith" was not known to him at that time but he invoked this ideal. Vijaykrishna Goswami was an important religious leader. Sri Ramakrishna, with a smile, told him: "*I was told that you had put up a 'signboard' here that people belonging to other faiths are not allowed to come in. Narendra (later Swami Vivekananda), too, said to me: 'You shouldn't go to the Brahmo Samaj.' But I say that we are all calling on the same God. Jealousy and malice need not be. Some say that God is formless, and some that God has form. I say, let one man meditate on God with form if he believes in form, and let another meditate on the formless Deity if he does not believe in form. What I mean is that dogmatism is not good. It is not good to feel that my religion alone is true and other religions are false. The correct attitude is this: My religion is right, but I do not know whether other religions are right or wrong, true or false. I say this because one cannot know the true nature of God unless one realizes Him. Kabir used to say: 'God with form is my Mother, the Formless is my Father. Which shall I blame? Which shall I praise? The two pans of the scales are equally heavy.*"

Sri Ramakrishna graced the annual festival of the Brahmo Samaj. The leaders of this Society held him in high respect. M noted: [Sri Ramakrishna's] *God intoxicated state of mind, his intense love of spiritual life, his burning faith, his intimate communion with God, and his respect for women, whom he regarded as veritable manifestations of the Divine Mother, together with the unsullied purity of his character, his complete renunciation of worldly talk, his love and respect for all religious faiths, and his eagerness to meet devotees of all creeds, attracted the members of*

the *Brahmo Samaj* to him. Devotees came that day from far-off places to get a glimpse of the Master and listen to his inspiring talk.

Today in this divided world, it is proven that inter-faith dialogues, through the sharing of knowledge and connections, help in strengthening communities and supporting spiritual wellness. Still many people are discriminated against and even attacked due to misconceptions, ignorance, and hostility based on their religious differences. Swami Vivekananda said, *"You know the disease, you know the remedy, only have faith."* Interfaith cooperation helps to improve such situations by deepening people's own understanding of their faith and values.

When people or groups from different religious or spiritual worldviews and traditions come together it is called Interfaith as well as "Inter-religious" meeting. Interfaith cooperation includes not only cooperation between diverse religious and spiritual backgrounds, but also the cooperation between those of different ethical beliefs. It works through many layers, such as: Interfaith dialogue (when a group of people talk about their beliefs), interfaith-based action (when a group of people of different beliefs do something together, such as gardening or cooking for those in need of food), and interfaith-based outreach (when people of diverse faiths educate others about religion).

Atheists are also welcome to be an integral part of this cooperation due their faith in love for humanity.. All may not have faith in "God". Sri Ramakrishna knew, *"Is it possible for all to comprehend God? God has created the good and the bad, the devoted and the impious, the faithful and the sceptical."*

Differing in practices within a single particular religion is referred to as *intrafaith*. For instance, within Hinduism there are many different faith

traditions Shaivism to Vaishnavism, Shakta to Vedanta, Ramayet to Ganapatya and so forth. Yet all these profess a Hindu faith. In Christianity, another term that identifies this type of group would be ecumenical.

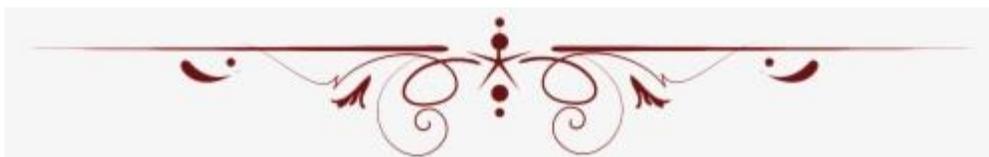
The World Council of Churches distinguishes between 'interfaith' and 'interreligious'. To the World Council of Churches 'interreligious' refers to action between Christian denominations.

Whatever the terminology or definition may be, Faith can make the impossible possible. It makes us conscious of oneness. How can separate things become one at the end? Sri Ramakrishna explained with an example: *"Is there anything that is impossible for faith? And a true devotee has faith in everything: the formless Reality, God with form, Rama, Krishna and the Divine Mother. "Once, while going to Kamarpukur, I was overtaken by a storm. I was in the middle of a big meadow. The place was haunted by robbers. I began to repeat the names of all the deities: Rama, Krishna, and Bhagavati. I also repeated the name of Hanuman. I chanted the names of them all. What does that mean? Let me tell you. While the servant is counting out the money to purchase supplies, he says, 'These pennies are for potatoes these for egg-plants, these for fish.' He counts the money separately, but after the list is completed, he puts the coins together."*

Or, it can be said in a little different way. It is like a window that is seen on the cover page. There are different slots but through any small glass-square the same light can be seen. This sense of oneness leads us to that immortal and real source of light which is faith. Let us add a line *saṁśayo mā viśvāsa gamāyā*, Lead us from doubt to faith, before we start our traditional prayer:

asato ma sadgamāyā, tamaso ma jyotirgamāyā, mṛtyorma amṛtam gamāyā

Lead us from the unreal to real; Lead us from darkness to light; Lead us from death to immortality; OM Peace, Peace, Peace.



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3801 N. Keeler Ave., Chicago, IL 60641

10.30 am, Saturday, May 21, 2022

Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago Welcomes You All.

Theme : The Message of Harmony

Welcome Address by: Swami Ishatmananda
In Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Swami Sarvadevananda
Judaism Rabbi Adir Glick
In Teachings of Sri Ma Sarada Swami Kripamayananda
Jainism Pradip Shah
In Bhagavad Gita Swami Prapannananda
Zoroastrianism Rohinton Rivetna
In Religious Culture Swami Yogatmananda
Buddhism Asayo Horibe
In Belur Math Temple Architecture Swami Tattwamayananda
Catholicism Daniel Olsen
Through Service to Humanity Swami Chandrashekharananda
Islam Imam Kareem Irfan
In Upanishads Swami Prasannatmananda
Sikhism Surender Pal Singh Sethi
In Teachings of Swami Vivekananda Swami Tyagananda
Protestantism Rev. Thomas Rowlinson
In Symbol of Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission Swami Ishtananda
Parliament of World's Religions Stephen Avino
In Monastic Ideals Swami Sarvapriyananda
Vote of Thanks Swami Varadananda
Emcee Jeffrey Fiore & Ashley Hughes
Music will be presented by Opera Singer Daniel Hendrick

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125 years of the Ramakrishna Order

Its Existence: Swami Sarvadevananda, Vedanta Society of Southern California

Its Birth: Swami Kripamayananda, Vedanta Society of Toronto

Its Growth -- in India: Swami Prapannananda, Vedanta Society of Sacramento

Its Growth -- in the West: Swami Yogatmananda, Vedanta Society of Providence

Its Phases: Swami Tattwamayananda, Vedanta Society of Northern California

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