

# *The Universal Concept of God*



Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama  
Bailur Math

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*Swami Vinayakananda*



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# Preface

Unique is Indian Culture with its Timeless appeal and Ageless Charm. Its supremacy is the Spiritual basis on which it stands and this very Spiritual basis is the essence and basis of all Religions and Religious understandings of all times — the past, present and future. In fact, the projections of Spiritual realisations are the concepts that are found in Indian philosophical systems, be it Divinity of man, or Immortality of the Self, or God being The Existence - Consciousness - Bliss - Absolute.

Thus it is said that religion is realisation and nothing short of it. From such realisations have emerged the various concepts of God. Each man is walking with his faith centered in one of the aspects of God in accordance with the tradition, culture and religion in which he has been brought up. This causes diversity which may create confusion in the minds of followers. Now and then many questions appear in the minds of not only spiritual aspirants (*Sâdhakâs*) but also in the minds of lay people and casual enquirers.

So, the entire picture, a bird's view, has been presented in this booklet that incorporates all aspects of God, in essence, of all times, of all places and of all religious and spiritual traditions. But our reading or study should not end with knowing or understanding these concepts, we must receive the impetus to realise the Truth. *Upanishads* and Sri Ramakrishna's teachings never end with mere theory of existence of God, they never began with it either. Their real appeal is not to the intellect but to the WILL of man. They are not to satisfy the intellectual urge but to goad man to realise God. They expect men not only to understand, though that is very much essential, but to act, to do; the only thing they would have them to do is to realise God and serve mankind.

This booklet is an answer to one of the questions by a devotee. Thus this first booklet is being brought out by this Ashrama on the auspicious occasion of *Durgârâdhanâ* with the prayer that your reading may make you evolve to your divine-hood and the world may find itself established in peace, love and harmony — for that was the wish of the Divine Trio — Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

।। स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ।।

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The present religious-spiritual scenario depicts that the modernity has made some people at least to look into the realities regarding their own and other's Faiths, practices and their end results. It is a good sign. On observation they find diverse views on religious philosophical, mythological and spiritual concepts which are difficult to reconcile. We find the diversity and the difficulty to reconcile because we observe the traditions, faiths and paths as 'outsiders' and not as 'insiders'. Like Sri Ramakrishna when we become 'insiders' of every faith, every path and every practice, we find their underlying unity.

Here is a query presented by a devotee. It says — “there are people who hold the view that one can attain Mukti or salvation by worshipping Krishna alone. Obviously, their view is suggestive of the claim that other Deities cannot grant you Mukti. Proponents of this view also quote Bhagavatam as their proof”. The discerning mind has asked whether this is true.

Yes, it is so to a believer. Christ is the only redeemer for the one who believes him to be so. So does the Islam say that the believer in Allah alone is saved, there is no other way. So, it is true to a believer, man's belief makes it true for himself alone. It may not be true for others. Every religious order that has come into existence has tried to convince the world that its path is the only way, and there is no other way than theirs.

## **God, the Absolute**

However, the fact is that none can limit God. If there be a single limitation, it cannot be God. The basic and final verdict that defines God is 'whatever be the God, It is limitless'. He cannot be limited by time. I am limited by time; I was not before, I am not going to be in the far future. All that exists in this Relative Existence is time-bound and is continuously changing subjected to the law of causation. Therefore, anything in this universe cannot be God. God pervades time and is beyond it too. Time and space (relativity) appear in God, and disappear in God again and again cyclically. Similarly, He is not limited by Space. I am here and not anywhere else. God is everywhere and beyond too. He is not limited by power, He is **Unlimited Power**. I have limited Power - I can lift only forty kgs. I can see up to a particular range and not beyond, I can think and act in a limited way - but God can do and undo anything. Further, He is not limited by form. God can appear in any form, at any time and by any means. I am limited by form; therefore, I cannot come to you in the form of a dog or a cat. Thus, we can be sure that God does respond to the call of a true devotee and appear in the exact way a devotee conceives of Him. If a devotee, true to the core, believes with unwavering firm faith that 'one can attain liberation by worshipping Krishna alone and none else', then God presents himself to the devotee exactly in the same way, since God has no limitations. He may appear in His pure formless aspect or as *Rāma* or as *Allah*, to the very next *Sādhaka*, according to his faith and dedication.

## **Man Calls, God Responds**

Each man has his own inherent nature. Added to that, he has his acquired nature depending upon the background in which he is born and brought up. He also has his own understanding and knowledge that he has gained through hearing, experience and intellectual discernment. Accordingly, he develops his conception of God. As God is all-knowing, the *In-dweller* (*Āntaryāmin*, अंतर्यामिन्) understands the feelings of man's heart, his sincerity and dedication. If man feels deeply what he speaks, if his own words and feelings match, if his external expressions are outcomes of his inner emotional upsurge, then God responds to that call of the heart without any delay and manifests in the form that the devotee longs to see or experience. What man needs are the spiritual requirements such as faith, sincere seeking and dedication.

## **Transcend Nature, Realise God**

The principle is this: if we *totally identify* ourselves with a conception or an idea or a theme, it becomes true and valid as long as the identification remains. For example, take the dream experience. Dream is purely an imaginary world of unconscious mental reflections. The entire dream world becomes real as long as we are in dream i.e. as long as our identification with dream body remains. This is because of our total identification with the dream body as 'my-self'. Actually, only the dreamer is real, dream is unreal. When one identifies with the dream body as 'myself', the Light of the Atman illumines that body as well as the dream-world, and thus he or

she feels the dream world and happenings there as very much real. In an exactly similar way, the God we conceive is only a mental conception till we realise Him, even while our feelings and emotions are true, our dedication and devotion are true, our seekings and strivings are true. On the other hand, though a mere mental conception, the God we conceive and adore is illuminated by the Light of our own Consciousness (*Caityana, Ātman*). So the entire set-up turns out to be a real episode. This is sufficient to cross the Nature—internal and external, and reach the Ultimate Reality, the Real God. Once we transcend Nature and reach the perfection, we realise that *sādhana* (spiritual struggle) too was a dream! This dream was created to wake us up from the 'cosmic dream', the world-dream. It is like using a thorn to remove another thorn that has got pricked into the foot.

### **Microcosm and Macrocosm**

There are two Existences i.e. the Absolute and Relative. The multi-dimensional universe, in which we are living now, is the **Relative Existence**. It is called Relative Existence because it is governed by relativity caused by time, space and causation—[time(then-now, yesterday-today-tomorrow etc), space (here-there, elsewhere etc,) and causation (this has caused that; law of cause & effect)].The whole universe is called Macrocosm (*Brahmāṇḍa*, ब्रह्माण्ड). Hundreds of embodied *jīvās* live in it; each is called a Microcosm (*Pinḍāṇḍā*, पिण्डाण्ड). Macrocosm and microcosm are built on the same principle. If we observe how we enter into sleep and wake up, then we can understand how the universe is created, or in other words, how the universe

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manifests itself. Every day, we pass through three states i.e. waking, dream and deep sleep (*Jāgrat*, *Svapna* and *Suṣupti*, जाग्रत, स्वप्न and सुषुप्ति). As we fall asleep from the waking state, we withdraw our external awareness; we expand and collapse to a point within us, losing completely external awareness as well as that of the gross physical body, (*Sthūla-Śarīra*, स्थूल-शरीर). From there, we enter into a dream world. As we enter the dream-world, we get identified with the dream-body. With that, the dream world becomes real, and we feel ourselves bodily living in that world, and thus we experience the joys and sorrows of the dream world. Our actual gross body is lying 'asleep'. And all that happens in dream is the play of mind. While in dream there is mind, intellect, all senses and the energy that sustains life (*Prāṇa*, प्राण)— this is called **subtle body** (*Sūkṣma-Śarīra*, सूक्ष्म-शरीर). Now, even from that dream-play, the Self withdraws its consciousness, we get separated from our subtle body too and enter the state of deep sleep. In deep sleep there is no knowledge whatsoever, neither is there observer nor the observed; there is neither the Self-knowledge nor the external knowledge—it is a sheath of ignorance covering the self and is called '**causal body**' (*Kāraṇa-Śarīra*, कारण-शरीर). While entering into deep sleep from the dream state, we again collapse back to a point and expand internally into the Cosmic Consciousness or the Consciousness (*Caitanya*, चैतन्य) that pervades this universe, (*philosophically called*) the **Iswara**. The point to which we collapse is called *Bindu* (बिन्दु), and expansion/spreading of the individual consciousness (*the Jīva consciousness*) into Cosmic Consciousness is called **Nāda** (नाद). The expansion of *Nāda*

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slowly merges in the Cosmic Consciousness, and unalloyed **Bliss** alone remains enveloped in **Bliss**. There is neither time nor space, only Bliss and Peace. We cannot remain in this state for long, our pending desires, our tendencies (वासना), fruits of our past actions (कर्मफल) bring us back to waking state. In the process of waking up, the individual consciousness separates itself from the Cosmic Consciousness which turns out to be the *Nāda*. *Nāda* internally shrinks down to a point which is *Bindu*. From *Bindu*, there is again external projection to re-manifest the subtle body and then gross physical body; first appears the 'I' Consciousness, then appears Intellect followed by mind, senses, *prāṇas* and the gross physical body, and we come to the waking state to see the world outside again. The stages, by which the evolutes (I-sense, Intellect, mind, senses etc.) manifest one after the other, are called *Kalā* (कला). Our real Self – the Atman is *Nāda-Bindu-Kalātīta* (नाद-बिन्दु-कलातीत), the Existence beyond all transformations.

This is about the *Pinḍāṇḍa*, the individual Soul. This cycle of waking, dream and deep sleep continues till death. And, when the spiritual entity that passes through the three states leaves the gross body and flies off with the subtle body we call it **death**, and when it acquires a new body we call it **birth**. The forces of *Karma* and *Vāsanā* (fruits of actions and acquired tendencies) force us to wake up from sleep, make us leave the body and acquire a new one to work out the pending *Kārmic* load.

The Cosmic level too follows the same course. In the same manner as we enter into sleep, the entire Cosmos retracts back

to its casual state. It follows the simple law – energy and matter are inter-convertible ( $E=mc^2$ ). The entire universe along with all beings – gross and subtle – disbands, dematerializes to get itself converted into **Pure Conscious Energy** technically called as Primordial Energy, and in Indian traditional context it is called the *Ādyāśakti* (आद्याशक्ति); being the cause of the universe, it has been assigned feminine gender and is honoured and adored as The Divine Mother of the Universe, *Jagadambā* (जगदम्बा). The Energy (*Śakti* शक्ति), taking the course of Bindu and Nāda becomes one with Pure Consciousness - The *Śuddha Caitanya*— the One Non-Dual Existence, the Ocean of Bliss and is indicated by the word '*Sat-cit-ānanda*' (सत्-चित्-आनन्द) or The **Existence Consciousness-Bliss-Absolute**. There is neither time nor space and, therefore, neither movement nor duality. It is the ocean of Bliss and Bliss alone. What it is cannot be explained through words nor be conceived through mind, *Vāṅgmanātīta* (वाङ्गमनातीत). It is the Ultimate Reality and is called the **Absolute Existence**. It is in contrast to the time-space-bound Relative Existence (The Universe) and, therefore, this existence is called the 'Absolute Existence'. It is in this Absolute Reality that the Universe (Relative Existence) appears, remains for a period and dissolves back, again and again and is called *Sṛṣṭi, sthiti, pralaya* (सृष्टि,स्थिति,प्रलय). In Hinduism, this indestructible Ultimate Reality, in which the universe with innumerable beings appear and disappear, is called 'The God-*Parabrahman*' (परब्रह्मन्). It is *pūrṇa* (पूर्ण), lacking nothing, and complete in itself, the One without a second (अद्वय). Out of Its fullness and overflowing Bliss, the

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Universes manifest, just like the excessive joy makes us horripilate. Being the product of 'Fullness', the Universe too is bound to be ***Pūrṇa, Perfect and Complete*** in itself. Since we identify ourselves with the body-mind complex which is a part of this Universe, we see this world as world and not as God. If we can separate ourselves from this body-mind-complex, then at once you will see God and God alone—the One God, the One Reality that appears as many—this vision is called *Viśva-rūpa-darśana* (विश्वरूपदर्शन). Sri Ramakrishna says “God alone has become all this, the *Jīvās* and *Jagat*”. We too have experienced such a phenomenon in our dreams — the one mind appearing in dream as many objects, living beings and actions, even as pain and pleasure. When dream ends, there is again the same one mind. *Viśvarūpa* is the **immanent aspect** of God i.e. the immanent Reality. Absolute Reality in which this Universe appears and disappears is called the **Transcendental Reality**. The Consciousness (*Caitanya*, चैतन्य) that pervades an individual body (*Pinḍāṇḍa*, पिण्डाण्ड) and says 'I am this body' is the *jīvātman*, the 'individual soul'. The same Consciousness that pervades the entire Cosmic Existence (*Brahmāṇḍa*, ब्रह्माण्ड) and says 'I am this universe' is called **the Īswara**, the Cosmic Soul, the Lord of the Universe. The Consciousness that is in the *Jīvatman* is part and parcel of the *Īswara*, and is identical with the Absolute Reality. For example, imagine a vast field. In it, there is a house and in the house, there is a pot. If you take the space that pervades the field as *Brahman*, then the space that pervades the house is *Īswara*, and the space that pervades the pot a *jīvātman*. The space of the pot is identical with the space of the house and they are identical with the space of the field. This

is because space is an indivisible entity. Space cannot be cut into small pieces and be carried from here to there but appears to be pot-space, house-space etc. Similarly there is One Consciousness, the Absolute Reality – the *Para Brahman*. When this *Parabrahman* is viewed as pervading the universe, we call That the *Īswara* and when we see That in individual body, it is called *Jīvātman*. When we limit our understanding and stand inside the house, and look at the pot-space as a part and parcel of house-space, then, we say that the house-space is pervading the pot. In an exactly similar way, when we see any being as a part of this Universe, we see that the Cosmic Consciousness (*Īswara*) is pervading the individual soul too, and this aspect of *Īswara* in *Jīva* is called *Antaryāmin* (अंतर्यामिन्).

### **Deities, Their Nature and Role**

With the appearance of the Universe, innumerable Power-Heads appear to maintain the law and order in it as well as to keep going the play; they are called *Devatās* (देवता). These *Devatās* are conscious Powers and can be invoked, or be called for help and support in times of hardship and distress, or to be the bestower of prosperity and happiness. To be more specific, they are called *Abhimāna Devatās* (अभिमान-देवता), which means 'a conscious entity that identifies itself with a material power and claims itself to be that'. For example, I pervade my physical body, the material body and claim this body to be myself i.e. I maintain the *Abhimāna* ('I'-ness) on this body as myself. Thus, Swami Vinayakananda is that conscious entity which constantly maintains the *Abhimāna* over the body as myself i.e.

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Swami Vinayakananda is the '*Abhimāna Devatā*' of the body which I am possessing now. Similarly, *Agni* (अग्नि) is that Conscious Entity which keeps the '*Abhimāna*' I am the fire, wherever in whatever way it exists'. *Varuṇa* (वरुण) is that '*Devatā*' which has the '*Abhimāna*' on water wherever and in whatever way it exists. Thus we say '*Varuṇa* is '*Abhimāna Devatā*' of water and *Agni* is '*Abhimāna Devatā*' of fire' and so on. During the Vedic period the *Ṛṣis* (seers, ऋषि) had the direct and immediate knowledge of the **Absolute**, the **Substratum** of this universe. Those illumined souls loved and honoured these powers and the Mother Nature just as a grand-father loves his grand-children. To live close to the Nature on Her lap being one with Her, they worshipped these Deities. It helped them to raise their Consciousness to Cosmic level from where the Reality beamed forth radiating Peace, Bliss and Harmony, and the inevitable problems of day-to-day life looked like mere child's play. These are called Natural or General Deities (सामान्यदेवता). On entering the spiritual realm, *Ṛṣis* discovered many aspects of the Reality which were sockets to which ordinary *jīvās* too can link themselves through their natural feelings of love or relationships or through faith and self-surrender and thereby attain absolute purity and perfection and thus transcend the Nature in its entirety and attain the Supreme Knowledge. These are specific Deities such as *Śiva*, *Pārvati*, *Durga*, *Gaṇeśa* etc. For easy comprehension, contemplation and immediate recollection and discernment, they were symbolised by giving them anthropomorphic improvised forms. They are specific spiritual power-points of the spiritual world that become

tangible through the meditation supported by pure life which is dedicated to higher ideals of life, especially *Tyāga* and *Sevā* (renunciation / sacrifice for others and service of all beings especially to the mankind). These are called Special Deities (*Viśeṣa-devatā*: विशेषदेवता).

### **Reality, Absolute and Relative**

There are two aspects of Reality or the Existence i.e. the Absolute and Relative. In Advaitic philosophy, they are known as *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti* (पुरुष and प्रकृति). In common language, we call them Consciousness /Spirit and Matter. In *Tantras*, they are known as *Śiva* and *Śakti* (शिव and शक्ति). In *Purāṇās* (पुराण), they are called *Caitanya* (चैतन्य) and *Jaḍa* (जड). *Caitanya* (Consciousness) is substratum and from it *Jaḍa* (Matter) manifests itself (in the same Consciousness). There cannot be Matter without Consciousness; but we see only Matter and not the *Caitanya* that pervades it. This is because our instruments i.e. senses, mind and intellect cannot depict It. If we go beyond our mind and senses, we can then perceive It (Consciousness) everywhere in every object at all times. This is precisely seeing God in everything. This *Caitanya* (Consciousness /Spirit) that accompanies *Jaḍa*, Matter, is called Divinity (*Daivatva*, दैवत्व). The perceptible or imperceptible manifestations of *Caitanya* in *Jaḍa*, or in other words, the Absolute (the Consciousness) in this relative Existence (the Mother Nature) is known as Divinity. The Deities we have discussed till now are all various Divinities existing within the Creation. There are two more aspects of Divinities that we need to know— The Trinities and the *Avatārās* (अवतार). Presume for example, I know driving, cooking and tailoring. The moment I sit on the driver's seat in a

car, my 'driving power' manifests. After returning home, I park my vehicle and go for cooking. At once, my driving power merges back in me and my 'cooking power' emerges out. Having finished my cooking, I begin my tailoring work. Again I find my cooking power merging back in me and my 'tailoring power' projecting out. I am the same person in my different aspects as a driver, a cook and a tailor. In each of these aspects, a particular power/*śakti* that accomplishes that particular work as driver etc., manifests and others remain merged in me. In a similar way, all-pervading Consciousness as *Īswara* who pervades the entire universe and governs it, gets associated with His different Powers and accomplishes different acts as Creator, Sustainer and Retractor/Destroyer of this Universe. The **Power** that creates is called ***Mahā-Sarasvati*** (महा-सरस्वती), the Power that sustains and maintains is called ***Mahā-Lakṣmī*** (महा-लक्ष्मी) and the power that withdraws/ retracts is called ***Mahā-Kālī*** (महा-काली). When the *Īswara* (also called Parameṣvara, परमेश्वर) gets associated with the power of creation, the *Mahā-Sarasvati*, He is called the Creator and is designated as *Brahmā* (ब्रह्म). The same *Īswara*, when He gets associated with the Power of sustenance *Mahā-Lakṣmī*, He is called sustainer and designated as *Viṣṇu* (विष्णु) or *Mahā-Viṣṇu* (महा-विष्णु); and when He is associated with the Power of retraction, the *Mahā-Kālī*, he is called *Maheśvara* (महेश्वर). In my three aspects as driver, cook and tailor, I am the same person but my aim, act, attitude, tendencies, attention, costumes, appearance, instruments, routine — everything changes, as if I am an entirely different person. The same is the case with the *Īswara* as a Creator, Sustainer and Retractor. Accordingly, He

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has been accredited with the names viz., *Brahmā* (ब्रह्मा), the Creator; *Viṣṇu* (विष्णु), the Sustainer and *Maheśvara* (महेश्वर), the Retractor / Destroyer. The *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Maheśvara* are three different aspects of the same *Īswara*. His Powers, the Powers of the three aspects viz., *Mahā-Sarasvatī*, *Mahā-Lakṣmī* and *Mahā-kālī* function continuously from the beginning to the end of the **creation**. Everything in this universe is going on in a cyclic order being subjected to time (*Kāla*, काल). Rains fall, evaporate to form cloud and again rains; tree-seed-tree; egg-hen-egg; sun rises and sets; all move in a cyclic motion. If you observe the sun rising, its old position is dying every moment and a new position is appearing. Childhood dies gradually giving birth to youth, and the youth gradually dies giving birth to old age. In every atom, in every particle, in every body, there is the constant activity of creation, sustenance and destruction going on! So the three Powers of *Sṛṣṭi* (सृष्टि, creation), *Sthiti* (स्थिति, sustenance), and *Pralaya* (प्रलय, retraction/ dissolution) are constantly working everywhere at all times. These three powers are collectively considered (since they are different aspects of one power) and named *Durgā* (दुर्गा = difficult or impossible to cross over).

### **Incarnation of God, The Meaning and Significance**

Now lastly about the *Avatāra* (अवतार). It is a very deep concept which I shall try to explain in a nut shell. You, as a person, are that Consciousness which pervades that body-mind-complex (शरीर-मन-सङ्घात) with which you are identifying and calling that as 'myself'. You are conscious of everything that happens in your body. A worm crawling on your hand or a

mosquito sitting on your face or pain in the stomach, any abnormality draws your attention at once. And you attend to them without much delay. Not only your body, but all those things and persons with whom you have developed attachment and 'mine-ness' would draw and bind your attention. Children going astray, any one throwing a stone at your car, shall cause pain because your consciousness, your interest pervades them. Similarly, the Consciousness that pervades this Universe and identifies itself with it i.e. the *Īswara*, feels for this world and for the beings in it. Every call, if it is earnest, coming from the core of man's being, strikes the Lord. The pain and sufferings of the mankind, the decline of righteousness, the rise of demonical tendencies or animosity draw the attention of the Lord. The all-pervading Consciousness, the Lord, manifests Himself in and through the material world in a perceivable way and thus '**He descends to earth**' as we commonly say. This is called *Avatāra*, the Divine Incarnation or the Incarnation of the God. Being infinite and limitless, any number of Incarnations or appearances do not affect God, the Real Eternal Being; He remains unaffected. It is like waves appearing in an ocean; any number of waves for any long period does not affect the ocean in any manner. Ocean remains the ocean, whether with waves or without. The God, the Lord of the Universe, the *Īswara* as all-pervading Consciousness is without a concrete form—*Arūpa* (अरूप) with qualities, *Saguṇa* (सगुण). *Avatārās* are *Saguṇas* and are with definite forms, *Sākārās*; *Saguṇa* - *Sākārās* (i.e. सगुण-साकार) whereas the Absolute Reality that is beyond this **Creation**, is without attributes (निर्गुण, *Nirguṇa*) and is formless (निराकार, *Nirākāra*). Rāma, Krishna, Buddha, etc., are known to be the Incarnations of God. When we observe

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Krishna's life, we hear of His birth, play, growth, and His *Leela* as a great teacher and finally His demise. Krishna as the son of *Devakī* and *Vasudeva* never existed earlier to that nor is there now. Krishna as the person is therefore a limited entity, and cannot be God, the Absolute. This is because anything that is limited cannot be God, the Absolute. That is why we say that Krishna is an Incarnation of God, Rāma is an Incarnation of God, as if the wave in an ocean, a huge wave in the ocean of *Sacchidānanda*. In our tradition, we accept Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God who came to this world to teach the mankind, redeem souls, re-establish *Dharmas* (धर्म) and bring peace and harmony in this world and make humanity live as one Global family. We do not consider Him as only an *Āchārya* (आचार्य) or a mere *Jīvan - Mukta* (जीवन-मुक्त) who is a realised soul. The manner in which he has given clarity on the aspects of human life, on the secrets of the spiritual life and the essence of all the religious observances, forces us to accept him as an Incarnation of God. Without a single word of contempt or refutation, he presents His realisations, the Eternal Truth, earned through hard *Sādhana* (साधना). Accepting all paths and religions, all denominations, realising the truths and the ends proclaimed by them, he has given validity to them all, and has removed the doubts and dirt acquired while passing from generation to generation. He has separated and shown the essentials from non-essentials in the religious and spiritual world. The age-long discord among *Śaivās* (शैवा), *Śāktas* (शाक्ता), *Vaiṣṇvas* (वैष्णवा), and among *Dvaitins*, *Advaitins* and *Viśiṣṭadvaitins* got solved and harmony established imperceptibly by drawing them to their common realm of

spirituality. The differences between the ancient and modern, the East and the West, the spiritual and the secular, were dissolved in that nectar of pure spirituality and divine love. His all - conquering love is bringing, though at a very, very slow pace, the entire world into one fold dissolving every type of difference— racial, religious, occupational, and pertaining to education, status, wealth and all other facets of life. The absolute purity, perfection and the humanly impossible *Sādhanās*, the Supreme Divine Love, the Supreme Knowledge and the Wisdom unseen hitherto, make every sensible man to surrender at once to His Feet.

### **Catholicity in World view**

He used to say “Never limit the God or the paths; God is infinite, paths that lead to Him too are infinite. Take up any path and proceed, have full faith in it and dedicate yourself to achieve the Goal of human life. Never say that your path alone is right and all other paths are wrong. All paths lead to the same goal, same end; the One God, the *One* without a second. The only purpose of human life is to realise God.”

We have heard that the Christ saves only Christians who believe in him and none else, Islam is also said to be claiming that only those who believe in their Allah and prophet alone shall be saved. So say all others. But Sri Ramakrishna shall be there with every aspirant (*Sādhaka*) whichever path/religion he/she follows, lovingly taking care of them, helping them to move in their own chosen path to make them reach the Goal. Who is that Sri Ramakrishna? Is He the *antaryāmin* (अंतर्धामिन्) that shines in the heart of every *jīva*, is He the One who appears

in many forms with many names and becomes the *Iṣṭadevatā* (इष्टदेवता) of the aspirants ?

He further says: “There are Eternal Truths and Eternal Values which do not change, but the human nature, the understandings, the way of life, social conditions, Nature's state and Her ways constantly change. According to time, place and social conditions, the Enlightened ones draw new concepts, new ways, laws and procedures to move towards the Divine. They take definite forms and get moulded into religions and religious paths. They remain appearing and disappearing in time. God makes path for every *jīva* to ascend. It is by the Will of God that so many paths and religions have appeared and by His Will that they disappear. The Eternal Truths and Eternal Values i.e. the Timeless Religion (*Sanātan-dharma*: सनातन-धर्म) alone abides.”

### **God, The Absolute and Personal**

When someone says “It is by worshipping Krishna alone that one can attain *Mukti* (मुक्ति), not by worshipping any other forms of *Sākāra* Deity”, it is not Krishna born in *Mathura* (मथुरा) and disappeared at *Prabhās* (प्रभास) is referred to. This is because that particular bodily existence is no more now. So, here in this context, the Krishna means One who manifested Himself as that bodily Krishna. They also say 'the Krishna is Supreme and the Ultimate Reality.' That means they are identifying Him with the Absolute Reality the *Parabrahman* (परब्रह्मन्), which is the impersonal aspect— The *Nirguṇa*

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*Nirākāra* aspect. Krishna as the Supreme can alone give *Mukti* to *jīvās*, not His perishable bodily structure possessed during the earthly *Līlā* (लीला). Even that perishable body has sanctified this earth and this air that we breathe and has given salvation to innumerable *jīvās*! Telling Krishna as Supreme is *Iṣṭaniṣṭhā* (इष्टनिष्ठा) of the devotees of Sri Krishna. *Iṣṭaniṣṭhā* means faith, devotion and dedication to one's chosen Deity (*IṣṭaDevatā*). This makes them look upon Krishna alone as supreme. Further, they cannot identify the 'Supreme' with any other Deity. Any Deity or object, if identified as Supreme, is fit to give *Mukti*. If you regard *Rāma* as Supreme, *Rāma* can give *Mukti*. Even if you worship a stone or a tree or an idol or any other object with unflinching faith as the Supreme, it is sure to give *Mukti*. Sri Ramakrishna says “Krishna means *Saccidānanda Krishna* (सच्चिदानन्दकृष्ण), Rama means *Saccidānanda Rama* (सच्चिदानन्दराम)”. This identification is done by adding '**Om**' (ॐ) behind the name or a *Mantra*. Rama is Dasharatha's son, Om Rama is Absolute Reality, the *Para Bramhan*. Adding *Om* is erasing **name and form** (नाम **and** रूप). When name and form are removed, qualities too disappear and the object reveals its real nature i.e. the Reality which is beyond name, form and causation, the *Para Bramhan*.

### **Conception of God, Evolution of Man**

Therefore, when some people say Krishna alone is saviour or Rama alone is saviour, it is their *Iṣṭa-Niṣṭhā*. We must have higher knowledge that makes us understand everyone's

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attitude, faith and dedication. They are definitely not wrong, but are incomplete. After all, we are all walking on different paths from different levels of evolution. Man's understanding and conception of *Jīva*, *Jagat* and *Īswara* (जीव, जगत् and ईश्वर: Soul, Nature and God) *changes* according to his stage of evolution. When the evolution is complete, man attains Perfection and Illumination. Then, he sees that they are one and the same Reality. When man says 'God is there in the Heaven', he is still in the kindergarten. When he says 'God is here in my heart', he has reached the high school. When he says 'God is everywhere', then he has reached University, and when he says 'all that exists is nothing but God', he has reached post-graduation. When he realises that God is limitless and beyond the reach of mind, intellect and speech, he becomes silent beaming with full Supreme Knowledge. In that silence he sees everything as God, and God in everything, and God beyond everything too. When any person comes and complains about the situations or people around him/her, my mind does not go to people or situation he/she is complaining about, but intensely sees that person bubbling with ignorance and how deeply he has identified himself with his body and mind. In place of God, that person is seeing evil! When will man evolve to his god-hood, be able to love all, and serve all? Whenever we see bad and wrong in this world, we have to check within ourselves and wash off the *Vāsanās* that make us see thus, and whenever we see good, great, noble and elevating, we have to acquire them at once.

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Finally, God can be realised through this human vehicle in five ways as follows:

1. The Transcendental Reality - *Parabrahman* (परब्रह्मन्).
2. The Immanent Reality - God alone has become all this : Universe and *Jīvas* (*Viśvarūpa* - विश्वरूप).
3. The Lord of the Universe - *Īswara* - ईश्वर
4. As the In-dwelling Spirit, - *Antaryāmin* (अंतःस्थामिन्)  
(the *Atman*)
5. The *Avatāra* - the Incarnations of God :  
Rama, Krishna etc.  
or the Specific  
manifestations as Shiva,  
Durga etc.

May the Supreme Lord of the Universe and The Divine Mother of this Universe, who manifest in various ways according to the needs and taste of the devotee / aspirant, fill your heart with pure love of God, and the Light of the Supreme Knowledge. May you attain everlasting Bliss, Peace and Freedom.





Holy Mother Rock at  
Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bailur Math