

Universal Religion of Vedanta.

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The religious history of the world tells us that from time immemorial Asia has been the home of great religions. All the grand religious ideals that have moulded the characters of barbarous nations, tamed human animals, and have made them civilized beings, the loftiest tenets of ethics and morality that have raised human beings above the animal plane, and all the sublime truths of spirituality that have made human characters godly and Divine and have moulded the spiritual ideals of nations and saviours of mankind first arose in the Orient. It was Asia that gave birth to great spiritual giants like Confucius and Buddha, Moses and Christ, Zoroaster and Mahomet, Śankara, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna. The spiritual horizon of the East has always been illumined with the glory of the self-effulgent sun of Divine Wisdom. Whenever there was any religious upheaval in any part of the world, the origin of that could be traced to the tidal wave of spirituality caused by the advent of some special manifestation of Divinity in some part of the Orient.

The present movement of the Universal Religion, which is rapidly spreading its powers all over the world and moulding the religious ideals of Europe and America, originated not very long ago in the very heart of the Orient. It is going to make a wonderful re-adjustment of the spiritual thoughts of the people and it

has already begun to bring the minds of the followers of all sects, creeds and denominations of all special religions back to the underlying essential truths and fundamental religious principles that are eternal. Its aim is to remove all discord and disharmony that prevail among different sects. The ideals of this Universal Religion will establish the harmony that exists between science, philosophy and religion and will prove that true religion does not depend upon doctrines and dogmas, nor upon books, scriptures and organizations, but upon the eternal truths discovered by the various branches of science and philosophy of the ancient and modern world. It will bring equal amount of comfort and consolation, peace and divine wisdom in the minds of the Christians and Jews, Mahomedans and Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus of all sects and denominations. This Universal Religion is not based upon any particular scripture, but it embraces all the scriptures of the world and recognizes their spiritual ideals and teachings as true and eternal. The Universal Religion is not built around any particular personality like Christ or Buddha, but it accepts all the great founders of religions as Divine Manifestations who appeared from time to time to establish righteousness and to remove the corruptions of the existing religions. For instance, the Universal Religion accepts Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Śankara,

Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and others as incarnations of the Heavenly Father or the Lord.

The fundamental principle of the Universal Religion is the Absolute Oneness of Divinity. "That which exists is one, men call it by various names.*" There is one existence, one reality, one life and one spirit. That Universal One is manifesting itself in infinite varieties of names and forms. It is the essence of our being, the foundation of our existence and the infinite basis of our intelligence and consciousness. It is the life of our life, the soul of our souls. It dwells in all beings and abides in all hearts.

Who could live for a moment if this eternal space were not filled with *Ananda* or Bliss † This Absolute One is called in Sanskrit 'Brahma'. It is the same as the "Good" of Plato, the "Substantia" of Spinoza, the "Ding-an-sich" of Kant, the "Will" of Schopenhauer, the "Over-Soul" of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the "Unknown and Unknowable" of Herbert Spencer. It is the Essence of the "Father in Heaven" of the Christians and of "Allah" of the Mahomedans. It is worshipped under different names such as Jehova and Kṛṣṇa; Christ and Buddha. It is Impersonal, yet it appears as the Personal God, the first-born Lord of the Universe. The same one, eternal Lord is not only the Father but the Mother of the Universe. He is the efficient and material cause of the phenomenal world.

* एकं सद्भिर्ना बहुधा वदन्ति ।

† को ह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्यात् यदि च आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात् ।

He creates, that is, at the beginning of the evolution He projects the world out of His own body, wherein it existed potentially in the unmanifested causal state. This undifferentiated causal state of the Universe is called in modern science the eternal energy. This eternal energy, which is the material cause of all phenomena, is called in Vedānta 'Prakṛti' (Latin *Procreatrix*), the creative energy.

The Universal Religion of Vedānta is not based upon the idea of a special creation out of nothing at a definite period of time, but upon the idea of the gradual process of Cosmic Evolution, from ethereal to gaseous, and gradually through liquid to solid, from solid to mineral, vegetable, animal and ultimately to man. The difference between all these grades is only in degree and not in kind. This evolution takes a period of many millions of years; then the dissolution or involution begins in a reverse order and the phenomenal world goes back to its causal state and remains latent in that state for a certain period to come out again through a similar process of evolution. Each of these periods of evolution and involution is called a 'Cycle' (*Kalpa*). The cycle of evolution is followed by a cycle of involution, which in turn is followed by another cycle of evolution and so on. The chain of evolution and involution is beginningless and endless. At the time of evolution an infinite number of individual souls evolve out of the causal state and going through the various grades of evolution become clothed, as it were, with the garment of their material

bodies of finer or grosser kinds and eventually become human beings. They manifest their latent powers, fulfil their desires, gain experience and knowledge and march onward towards perfection. According to the Universal Religion of Vedānta, each individual soul possesses infinite potentialities and unlimited possibilities; each one is potentially Divine and is bound to reach perfection sooner or later, however imperfect or sinful he may appear to be at present.

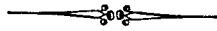
According to the Universal Religion our souls are not born in sin and iniquity, but we are all children of Immortal Bliss. We are not predestined to suffer eternally, nor is this birth the first and last chance of our earthly existence. Our present is the resultant of our past and our future will be the result of our present. We shape our own destiny and mould our own future by our thoughts and deeds.

God does not punish the wicked nor does He reward the virtuous. The wicked punish themselves and the virtuous reward themselves, being subject to the law of *Karma* or

Cause and Sequence. Punishment and reward are nothing but the reaction of our own actions and thoughts.

The attainment of freedom from the law of *Karma*, from birth and re-birth and from all imperfections, and the realization of perfection and God-Consciousness are meant by salvation in the Universal Religion of Vedānta. This salvation must begin here in this life. He who has attained to salvation shall be free from all bondage and attachment to earthly conditions and selfishness; he shall manifest Divine Perfection in all the actions of his body and mind; he shall love all living creatures equally and shall see Divinity everywhere.

All knots of desire are torn asunder, all doubts cease for ever, all *Karma* and its effects are transcended, and all aims of life are fulfilled when perfection is reached.* All sufferings and sorrow, disease and death will disappear from the soul which has become perfect in this life. Such a soul lives and dies for others. He is a Buddha, a Christ, a Śankara, a Ramakrishna.



Immortality as well as death reside in this body. Through the Brahmic consciousness one attains immortality; through infatuation, death.

Weak or strong, brave or timid, learned or ignorant, everyone succumbs to Death before he is able to do all that he desires.

* भिद्यते हृदयमन्विच्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः । क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥