

Speeches  
of

# Swamy Vivekananda

“DARE TO BE FREE,  
DARE TO GO AS FAR AS  
YOUR THOUGHT LEADS,  
AND DARE TO CARRY THAT  
OUT IN YOUR LIFE.

- VIVEKANANDA.

collected by madhuronda

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দার আত্মজীবনী  
এই বইটিতে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দার জীবন  
কালের কথা বর্ণিত হয়েছে।



Swami Vivekananda

## THE IDEAL OF A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

### HOW IT MUST EMBRACE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MINDS AND METHODS.

WHERESOEVER our senses reach, or our minds can imagine, we find action and reaction of the two forces, one counteracting the other, causing the constant play of these two, the mixed phenomena that we see around us or feel in our mind. In the external world, it is expressing itself in physical matter, as attraction and repulsion, centripetal and centrifugal. In the internal world, it explains the various mixed feelings of our nature, the opposites, love and hatred, good and evil. We repel some things, we attract some things. We are attracted by some one, we are repelled by some one. Many times in our lives we find without any reason whatsoever we, as it were, are attracted towards certain persons; at other times, similarly, mysteriously, we are repelled by others. This is patent to all, and the higher the field of action the more potent, the more remarkable, are the actions of these forces. Religion is the highest plane of human thought, and herein we find that the actions of these two forces have been most marked. The intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion, and the most diabolical hatred that humanity has known has come from religion. The noblest words of peace that the world has ever heard have come from men on this plane, and the bitterest denunciation that the world has ever known has sprung from religious men. The higher the object, the finer the organization, the more remarkable are its actions. So we find that in religion these two forces are very remarkable in their actions. No other human interest has deluged the world so much in blood as religion ; at the same time nothing has built so many hospitals and asylums for the poor ; no other human influence has taken such care, not only of humanity, but of the lowest animals, as religion. Nothing makes us so cruel as religion, nothing makes us so tender as religion. This has been in the past, and will be in the future. Yet from the midst of this din and turmoil, and strife, and struggling, the hatred and jealousy of religions and sects, from time to time, arise potent voices, crying above all this noise, making themselves heard from pole to pole, as it were, for peace, for harmony. Will it ever come?

Our subject for discussion is, is it possible that there ever should come harmony in this tremendous plane of struggle? The world is agitated in the latter part of this century by questions of harmony; in society, various plans are being proposed, various attempts are made to carry them into practice, but we know how difficult

## GOD IN EVERYTHING.

WE have seen how the greater portion of our life must be told of necessity to be filled with evils, however we may resist, and that this mass of evil is practically almost infinite for us. We have been struggling to remedy this since the beginning of time, yet all remains very much the same. The more we discover remedies the more we find subtle evils existing in the world. We have also seen that all religions propose a God, as the one way of escaping these difficulties. All the religions tell us that if you take the world as it is, as most practical people would advise us to do in this age, then nothing -would be left to us but evil. But religions assert that there is something beyond this world. This life in the five senses, life in the material world, is not all that we have, it is only a small portion, and merely superficial. Behind and beyond is the Infinite time where there is no more evil, which some people call God, some call Allah, some Jehovah, Jove, and so on. The Vedantin calls it Brahman. Yet we have to live.

The first impression of the advice given by religions is that we had better terminate our existence. The question is how to cure the evils of life, and the answer apparently is, give up life. It reminds one of the old story. A mosquito settled on the head of a man, and a friend, wishing to kill the mosquito, gave it such a blow, that he killed both man and mosquito. The remedy seems to suggest a similar course of action. Life is full of ills, the world is full of evil; that is a fact no one who is old enough to know the world can deny.

But what is the remedy proposed by all the religions ? That this world is nothing. Beyond this world is something which is very real. And here is the real fight. The remedy seems to destroy everything. How can that be a remedy ? Is there no way out? Here is another remedy proposed. The vedanta says that what all the religions advance is perfectly true, but it should be properly understood. Often it is misunderstood, and the religions are not very explicit and not very clear. What we want is head and heart together. The heart is great indeed; it is through the heart that come the great inspirations of life. I would a hundred times rather have a little heart and no brain, than be all brains and no heart. Life is possible, progress is possible, for him who has heart, but he who has no heart and only brain dies of dryness.

At the same time we know that he who is carried along by his heart alone has to undergo many ills, for now and then he is liable to fall into pits. The combination of heart and head is what we want. I do not mean that a man should have less heart or

## THE RAMAYANA.

'THERE are two big epics in the Sanskrit language

which are very ancient. Ofcourse there are hundreds of other epic poems, as Sanskrit has continued down to the present day as literature although it has ceased to be a spoken language more than two thousand years. I am speaking to you now of the two most ancient epics, as they embody the manners and customs, the state of society, civilization, etc., of the ancient Indians. The oldest of these is called “ Ramayana,” the Life of Rama. There was some poetical literature, of course, before that; but the most part of the vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus, are written in a peculiar sort of metre. But this book is deemed, by common consent in India, as the first beginnings of poetry.

The name of the poet or sage is valmiki. Later on, a great many poetical stories were fastened upon the ancient poet. At last, it became a very beautiful arrangement without an equal in the literature of the world.

There was a young man, who could not in any way support his family. He was strong and vigorous, and became a highway robber : he held up persons in the street, and robbed them; but with that money he supported his father and his mother, his wife and his children. Continually this went on, till one day a great saint called Narada was passing by; and the robber attacked him also. The sage asked the robber: ‘Why do you want to rob me ; It is great sin. You kill human beings and rob them. What do you do is sin’ The robber said : “ Why, I want to support my people with this money.” “Now”, says the sage, “ do you think that they take share of your sin also?” “Certainly they do.” “ Yery good,” says the sage, “ Tie me up here ; make me safe ; go home and ask your people whether they would share your sin, they share the money you make.” And this man went to his father : “ Father, do you know how I support you ?” “No, I do not.” “ I am a robber ; I have killed many persons and robbed a great many.’ “ You; my son; get away! out- cast !” He came to the mother: “ Mother, do you know how I support you ?” “ No.” “I am a robber.” “ How horrible!” said the mother. “ But do you take part in any sin “ Why should I ? I never committed robbery”, said the mother. Then he went to his wife : “ Do you know how I maintain you all ?” “ No.” “ Why, I am a highway robber; I have been doing this for years, and that is how I am supporting and maintaining you all. And now, are you ready to share my sins ?” “ Certainly not; you are the husband ; it is your duty to support me.” The eyes of the robber opened : “ That is the way of the world—

## MAYA AND FREEDOM.

RAILING clouds of glory we come," says the poet. Not all of us come trailing clouds of glory though, some of us come also trailing black fogs behind us; no question. But we are sent into this world as into the battlefield to fight, everyone of us. We must come here weeping to fight our way, as well as we can, to make a path through this infinite ocean of life without leaving any track; forward we go long ages behind us, and immense the expanse beyond. So on we go, till death comes, takes us off the field, victorious or defeated, we do not know, and this is Maya. Hope is dominant in the heart of childhood. The whole is a golden vision to the opening eyes of the child; his will he thinks is supreme. As he moves onward, at every step Nature stands, as an adamant wall barring his further progress. He may hurl himself against it again and again striving to break through. Through his life the further he goes the further recedes the ideal till death comes, and there is release perhaps, and this is Maya. A man of science rises, he is thirsting after knowledge. No sacrifice is too great, no struggle too hopeless for him. He moves onward discovering secret after secret of Nature, searching out the secrets from the innermost heart of Nature, and what for? What is all this for? Why should we give him glory? Why should he acquire fame? Does not Nature know infinitely more than any of us human beings, can know, and Nature is dull, insentient. Why should it be glory to imitate the dull, insentient? Nature can hurl a thunderbolt to any distance and of any magnitude. If a man can do one little bit of it we praise him, laud him up to the skies, and why? Why should we praise him for imitating Nature, imitating death, imitating dullness, imitating insentience?

The force of gravitation can pull to pieces the biggest mass that ever existed; yet it is insentient. What glory is in imitating the insentient? Yet we are all struggling after that, and this is Maya.

The senses drag the human soul out. Man is asking for pleasure, for happiness where it can never be found; for countless ages every one of us is taught that this is futile and vain, there is no happiness here. But we cannot learn; it is impossible for us to learn, except through our own experiences. We must try them, and a blow will come; will we learn then? Not even then. Like moths hurling themselves against the fire we are hurling ourselves again and again on to the senses, to find some pleasure there. We return again and again with freshened energy; thus we go on till crippled, cheated, we die, and this is Maya and So with our intellect, trying to solve the mysteries of the Universe, we cannot stop the questioning, we must know that there

## MAYA AND THE CONCEPTION OF GOD.

WE have seen how the idea of Maya, which forms, as it were, one of the basic doctrines of the Advaita Vedanta, is, in its germ, found even in the Samhitas, and that in reality all the ideas which are developed in the Upanishads are to be found already in the Samhitas in some form or other. Most of you are by this time perfectly acquainted with the idea of Maya, and know that it is sometimes very erroneously explained as illusion, so that when the Universe is said to be Maya, that also would have to be explained as being illusion. The translation of the word is neither happy nor correct. Maya is not a theory, it is simply a statement of facts about the Universe as it exists, and to understand Maya we must go back to the Samhitas and begin with the conception in the germ. We have seen how the ideas of these Devas came. At the same time these Devas were at first only powerful beings, nothing more. Most of you are horrified when reading the old scriptures, whether of the Greeks, the Hebrews, the Persians, or others, to find that the ancient gods sometimes found things which, to us, are very repugnant, but when reading these books, we entirely forget that we are persons of the nineteenth century, and these gods were beings existing thousands of years ago, and we also forget that the people who worshipped these gods found nothing incongruous in their characters, found nothing to frighten them in depicting their gods as they did, because they were very much like themselves. I may also remark that this is the one great lesson we have to learn throughout our lives. In judging others we always judge them by our own ideals. That is not as it should be. Every one must be judged according to his own ideal, and not by that of any one else. In all our dealings with our fellow-beings we constantly labour under this mistake, and I am of opinion that the vast majority of our quarrels and fights with our fellow-beings arise simply from this one cause, that we are always trying to judge other gods by our own, other ideals by our ideals, and others' motives from our motives. Under certain circumstances I might do a certain thing, and when I see another person taking the same course I think he has also the same motive actuating him, little dreaming that although the effect may be the same, yet many thousands of causes may produce the same effect. He may have performed the action with quite a different motive from what would impel me to do the same thing. So in judging of those ancient religions we must not take the ordinary standpoint to which we incline in our judgment of others, but must throw ourselves, as it were, into the position of thought in those early times.

The idea of the cruel and ruthless Jehovah in the Old Testament has frightened many—but why ? What right have they to assume that the Jehovah of the ancient

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

THE Self-Existent One projected the senses outwards and, therefore, a man looks outward, not within himself. A certain wise one, desiring immortality, with inverted senses perceived the Self within." As we have been saying, the first inquiry that we find in the Samhita, and in the other books, was going outwards, and then a new idea came, that the reality of things is not to be found in the external world ; not by looking out, as it were but by turning the eyes, as it is literally expressed, inwards. And the word used for the soul is very significant, it is He who has gone inward, the innermost reality of our being the heart centre, the core, from which, as it were, every- thing else comes out, the central sun, of which the mind,, the body, the sense organs, and everything else that wo have, are but rays going outwards. " Men of childish intellect, ignorant persons, run after desires, which are external, and enter the trap of far-reaching death, but the wise, understanding immortality, never seek for the eternal in this life of finite things." The same idea is related and made clear, that in this external world, which is full of finite things, it is impossible to see and find the Infinite. The Infinite must be sought in that which is infinite alone and the only thing infinite about us is that which is in us, our own soul. Neither the body, nor the mind, nor the world we see around us, not even our thoughts, are infinite. They all have beginning in time and finish in time. The Seer, he to whom they all belong, the soul of man, he who is awake in the internal man, alone is in finite, and seek for the infinite use of this whole Universe we must go there, and in the infinite soul alone we can find it." What is 'there that is here, and what is here that is there. He who sees the manifold is going from death to death." We have seen how at first there was the desire to go to heaven. When these ancient Aryans became dissatisfied with the world around them, naturally, they thought that after death they would go to some place where there would be all happiness without any miseries ; these places they multiplied and called Svargas—the word may be translated as heavens—where there would be joy for ever, the body would become perfect, and also the mind, and there they would live with their forefathers. But as soon as philosophy came, men found it was simply impossible and absurd. The very idea of an infinite in place would be a contradiction in terms. A place must begin and is in time, therefore, they had to give that up. They found out that the gods who lived in these heavens had once been human beings here, and through their good works, or something else had become gods, and the godhoods, as they called them, were different states, different positions ; none of the gods spoken of in the Vedas are permanent individuals.

**End of Preview.**

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