



The One Goal of All Nature, by Swami Vivekananda

The grandest idea in _Vedanta_ is that we may reach the same goal by different paths; and these paths I have generalised into four—viz., those of work, love, psychology and knowledge. But you must, at the same time, remember that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other. But according to the type which prevails we name the divisions. It is not that you cannot find a man who has no other faculty than that of work, nor that you cannot find men who are more than devoted worshippers only, nor that there are not men who have more than mere knowledge. These divisions are made in accordance with the type or the tendency that may be seen to prevail in a man.

We have found that, in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal.

I have already tried to point out that goal. It is freedom as I understand it. Everything that we perceive around us is struggling towards freedom, from the atom to the man, from the insentient, lifeless particle of matter to the highest existence on earth, the human soul. The whole universe is in fact the result of this struggle for freedom. In all combinations every particle is trying to go on its own way, to fly from the other particles; but the others are holding it in check.

Our earth is trying to fly away from the sun, and the moon from the earth. Everything has a tendency to infinite dispersion. All that we see in the universe has for its basis this one struggle towards freedom ; it is under the impulse of this tendency that the saint prays and the robber robs. When the line of action taken is not a proper one we call it evil, and when the manifestation of it is proper and high we call it good. But the impulse is the same, the struggle towards freedom. The saint is oppressed with the knowledge of his condition of bondage, and he wants to get rid of it ; so he worships God. The thief is oppressed with the idea that he does not possess certain things, and he tries to get rid of that want, to obtain freedom from it ; so he steals.

Freedom is the one goal of all nature, sentient or insentient ; and, consciously or unconsciously, everything is struggling towards that goal. The freedom which the saint seeks is very different from that which the robber seeks ; the freedom loved by the saint leads him to the enjoyment of infinite unspeakable bliss, while that on which the robber has set his heart only forges other bonds for his soul.

--Swami Vivekananda

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