Parables prod and provoke, challenge and chasten, awaken and activate.

- Peter Ribbes

THE PARABLES OF CHRIST AND RAMAKRISHNA: A THEMATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
CHAPTER FIVE

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A THEMATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Chapter Five

The Parables of Christ and Ramakrishna: A Thematological Perspective

*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.*
- John 14.6

*Different paths lead to the same Goal.*
- TP 32

5.1. Unity of Vision

Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa are great men of God whose sole mission on earth was the liberation of the human person. It is this similarity and oneness of their mission and vision that basically account for the underlying unity of the major themes expounded by these divine teachers of spirituality.

Whatever differences, however, one discerns are only the differences conditioned by the socio-historical, spatio-temporal and religio-philosophic specifics of their respective contemporary life-patterns. An attempt is made to probe deep into the various themes dealt with by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in their parables with a view to highlighting their unity of vision and the commonness and the differences in their treatment of the major themes. In this study, only the most representative themes are
analyzed and discussed in terms of the general framework of the thematological categorization worked out in the previous chapters.

The parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa invariably centre around and mainly focus on major themes such as God, Kingdom of God, Faith, Renunciation, Love, Sin and Forgiveness, Yearning, Incarnation, Humility, *Maya*, *Yoga*, Man in Divine State and Re-birth. This is basically because it was only through these homiletic discourses and ecclesiastical expositions that they brought 'man closer to God'. As Hans Torweston aptly comments:

Christ and Sri Ramakrishna have come to this world to reflect God’s light to mankind. Their life itself is a revelation of God. They have lived a witnessing life and brought man closer to God. (22)

The parabolists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa are reputed for handling the parabolic method of teaching the divine aspects of God, God-Man relationship and the fulfillment of the God-Man union of spiritual intercourse leading to heavenly blessing and eternal bliss. Their simple mode of presentation, similitude and allegories and images are the prominent features in their parables. The common people, especially the
uneducated masses, are able to understand the teachings of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and they eagerly ask questions. A child is taught by narrating a story and knowledge is imparted to the child through the moral it holds. This same method is adopted by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa enlightening the listeners with divine knowledge. They have expressed their views vividly through their parables. The disciples of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa heard them with sincerity, awe, reverence and wonder. They taught with authority which could be done only by those who have the divine power and the divine experience.

From the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John of Lord Jesus Christ and from the Gospel of the Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, we realize that both of them have used the parable literally for the same purpose and aims. There is a close resemblance and an underlying unity of vision in their views of God, man, woman, love and they are alike in the tone and tenor, manner and method of presentation. The subject matter is chosen from the daily life. Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa preached with great love and affection for the mass that were around them to listen to them with great expectation and deep spiritual hunger.
Jesus Christ also spread the gospel through parables and often explained the meaning of the parable to his disciples clearly if they failed to understand it. He often questioned them to get answers from them so that he could be clear that they have understood the spiritual truth. Thus he opened to them the kernel inside the seed and they were able to taste and enjoy the love of God. The parables “The Sower and the Seed”, “The Mustard Seed” and “Leaven” prove that Jesus had an eye on everything and he did the right follow-up like a genuine teacher or preacher.

Similarly Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa would not stop with the teaching of the parable but would keep a keen eye on how far the disciples carried them out into practice and when they acted contrary to his instruction, he would correct them by explaining the parable again to them. Swami Saradhananda points out, “The master kept an eye on everything in spite of his great tendency to spiritual moods” (294).

Moreover, both of the parabolists had thorough knowledge of their respective scriptures. They had the divine inspiration from God and their teachings were spontaneous overflow of powerful intuitions recollected in tranquility – the union with God which they attained from their deep spiritual contact with God. Jesus Christ’s parables reflected *Old Testament* teachings.
Yet his way of teaching was quite different from the way of teaching during the *Old Testament* time. Quite a few of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables are based on the events narrated in the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*. Yet the mode of presentation was different. Thus the use of parables by both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa serve the additional purpose of maintaining the certainty, centrality and continuity of the Holy Scriptures and the sacred traditions of their faiths.

5.2. God – Brahman

The purpose of God as revealed by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa resemble in many ways. The “four cardinal points of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's teachings are the Oneness of Existence, Divinity of Man, Unity of God and the Harmony of Religion” (*TP* 39). He tried to bring unity among all religions. He defines God as:

Father in heaven, just and moral, governing eternal spirit Nirvana or the existence of desire, light, love, etc. God is defined as the God of all religions, is only the light manifestation of the absolute by the finite human mind expressed through imperfect human language. (*TP* 64)
Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa feels that God is the same Rama with thousand names. The Divine Mother Kali is described by him as “My Divine Mother Kali is none other than the Absolute. She is at the same time the one and the many and beyond the one and the many” (qtd in Rolland 67). He goes on to define the Divine Mother in her own words:

My Divine Mother says: I am the mother of the Universe, I am the Brahman of the Vedanta, at-man of the Upanisads. It is I Brahman who create differentiation, good and bad works alike by me [. . .] It is I who am the law giver. It is I who make and unmake law. I order all human good and bad come (qtd in Rolland 67).

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has practised all religions and he has also seen God through the divine Jesus.

When Malik, a Hindu read the Bible Sri Ramakrishna saw Madona and the child and was fully absorbed and his heart was overflowing with the love of Jesus. The song lingered in his heart. Behold, the Christ who shed his heart’s blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for love of man. It is he the master yogi who is in eternal union with God. It is Jesus, Lord incarnate. To Ramakrishna Christ was
not the only incarnation, Buddha and Krishna were others (qtd in Rolland 76-77).

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa captures very clearly, through his parables, the ambience of Brahman (God) and the other aspects of the Divine. The parable “Four Friends Looked Beyond” (TP 160) reveals the might and magnificence of Brahman. God cannot be explained by anyone. One day four friends went for a walk. They saw a place where there was a very huge wall. They wanted to see what was inside. One of them climbed the wall and said “Ah! Ah!” and jumped inside. He was not able to explain what was inside. Similarly all the other three also climbed the wall, cried “Ah! Ah!” and jumped inside. What Brahman is cannot be described. Even he who knows it cannot talk about it. As one goes nearer and nearer one loses sight of his upadhis, his attributes.

The parable “King and the Magician” unfolds in a spurt, as it were, the majesty, marvel and mystery of the Brahman. A magician once went to show magic before the king. When the magician showed magic the king saw a rider on a horse that was brilliantly arrayed. The audience could not understand the truth. But they found out that the horse and the robbers were
not a real one. But the rider alone was there. This parable deductively proves that Brahman alone is real. All the others are unreal.

“When Face to Face” is another parable, which reveals that where the mind attains peace by practising the discipline of Neti, Neti there Brahman is. The king dwells in the innermost room of the palace which has seven gates. When a person enters the first gate he sees a person with glory and grandeur and he asks his friend if this was the king. Then as he passes through the other gates, he repeats the same question. But finally when he reaches the seventh gate he is face to face before the king and he is speechless. All that it seeks to establish is the divine truth that as one goes nearer to God one finds oneself in the spiritual domain of absolute silence.

There are numerous parables by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa which highlights the truth about the ‘Aspects of the Divine’. The parables “Thus Saw Arjuna”, “Nothing is Impossible for Him”, “God is Under the Control of the Devotees”, “She Came and Went Away” (TP 179) and “All Else is Unreal” (TP 181) reveal the myriad ‘aspects of the Divine’. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, being a ‘practiser’ of all religions, has attained great knowledge about Brahman and his parables, thus, became ideal spiritual vehicles for realising the otherwise mysterious ‘Aspects of the Divine’.
Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has astonished his listeners, especially the Hindus just as Jesus Christ has astonished the people who thronged around him, especially the Jews/Israelites with their persuasively powerful preachings about God, Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s mission was to spread the gospel of God to man as he saw God. Jesus Christ also came to this world to reveal the love of God to man and the path to be followed to inherit the eternal life. Jesus’ mission of God is similar to that of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

Jesus Christ incarnated in this world to save the sinners, for the entire mankind, irrespective of one’s social status, geo-political affinities or cultural bonds. The divine ministry of Jesus Christ was just like that of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s to reveal the mystery of God. Jesus defines God as the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (John 14.6-7). His parables “The Lost Sheep” (Matt 18.10-14), “The Ten Virgins” (Matt 25.10-13) and “The Wicked Tenants” (Matt 21.33-34) present God as shepherd, Father, bridegroom and Judge. Whatever be the imperfect human language expressed through the finite human mind to perceive the Ultimate Reality, the notion of God-head as revealed by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa draws to a focal point where God, to both of them, is the benign liberator of the entire humanity.
5.3. Faith - Reward

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, when 'quantitatively' compared to Jesus Christ, has narrated a lot of parables relating to faith. Jesus Christ has insisted upon having faith in God. Naturally, his parables strongly touch upon the faith-theme as in "The Prodigal Son" and in the parable "The Sower and the Seed". In the parable "The Prodigal Son" the sinner repents and turns to God with faith. In the parable, "The Sower and the Seed", the seed that falls on good ground grows up and bears fruits. It means that a believer who accepts the word of God stands firm in faith and bears fruits a hundred fold.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's excellent parable about faith is "A Disciple and her Pot of Curds" (TP 84). Here Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa narrates the story of a guru who celebrated annaprasana ceremony in his house. His disciples volunteered to give what they could to the guru. There was a poor woman disciple who milked her cow and brought a jar of milk to the guru. The guru did not accept her offering because it was very little and threw the milk away. The woman disciple went to the river and thought of drowning herself. God appeared to her and gave a pot of curd, which when poured will never become empty. This she offered to the guru and the guru was astonished.
Now, the guru went to the river along with the woman disciple and got inside the river to get himself drowned if God did not appear before him. He called on God. But God did not appear. The woman disciple then called God and she was afraid that her guru would die if God did not show him to the guru. So she pleaded to God to appear before her guru. If not she decided to die along with the guru. So God appeared before the guru, but only once. This parable reveals the greater faith that a poor woman disciple had than her teacher. Seeing her humility God appeared to her.

In the parable "Faith is the Mother of Miracles" (TP 96), Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has narrated the story of a woman who brings milk every morning to the priest. When she came late the priest asked her why she was late. She replied that she had to wait for the boatman to take her across the river. The priest told her that people are able to cross the river of faith by uttering the name of the Lord. So the woman started uttering the name of the Lord and walked over the river. The priest was surprised because she brought milk early in the morning every day. He asked her the reason and she revealed the truth. The priest wanted to see how the woman walked over the water and he asked her to take him to the river and show him how she walked. She walked over the river and the priest followed her. She was surprised to see his pathetic state. He was uttering the name of the Lord and
was holding his clothes so that it should not get wet. The faith of the woman is greater than that of the priest.

The true faith of a devotee is revealed in the parable “A True Devotee’s Faith” (*TP* 88). In this parable Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa reveals faith in all gods. While Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was going to Kamarpukur he had to pass through a place where there were robbers. So he uttered the name of all gods, Rama, Krishna Bhagavathi and also Hanuman. He says that when a servant goes to purchase things he will count in his mind the money and the things he had to purchase. In the same way Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa also called the names of all Gods to cross the forest safely.

A true devotee has faith in everything. He will have faith in God in the form of Rama, Krishna and the Divine Mother. The parables “The Simple Secret”, “Faith Absolute”, “Faith Unbound” (*TP* 88-90) present faith as the very cornerstone of one’s religious life and spiritual experience. And the one thing in common between Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is that both of them have stressed on the simple, pure, innocent, child-like faith for one’s self realization and realization of God, the Almighty.
5.4. Love - Liberation

There is a striking similarity between Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa particularly in their attitude towards love. Jesus Christ taught the two commandments, to love God with all your heart and mind and soul and to love your neighbour as you love yourself. The parable of “The Good Samaritan” reflects the love shown by the Samaritan to the wounded man. It establishes the fact that love is the greatest liberator. In the parable “The Good Samaritan”, a man was found attacked by robbers and he was left injured. The two persons who are expected to do him service rejected him. But only one heeding not the urgency of his personal work attended to the wounded man. One who attends to his fellow-being, who is in need, is the Good Samaritan. Jesus Christ himself said “What you have done to the little one you have done it to me” (Matt 24.45). This act of love and kindness shown to his neighbour proves the love he has for God. “Love” is the central theme of Jesus Christ’s teachings which finds profound expression in his parables.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa also bestowed upon mankind the need for the gift of the divine love. He had deep affection and love even for the hardhearted man. Even hardhearted man turned over a new leaf by conversing
with him. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa says, "The Best one Offering to God is Love" (*TP* 100). Once a servant of a rich man brought him a custard apple wrapped in a cloth. The master accepted it happily. In the same way "God looks into the heart of the devotee". He is infinite in his grandeur. He is responsible for the influence of love and devotion (*TP* 100).

Jesus Christ has also brought out a similar truth when many offered offerings to God. There was one widow who had as her possession only two coins which with all her heart and soul she offered to God. Others offered out of their abundance, but this widow offered all that she had unmindful of her poverty. God accepted only her offerings. What matters here is not what you offer but how far you love God. That love is the powerful force which can make God turn towards man is the central message of both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. It is this divine love that manifests as selfless love towards one’s fellow-beings, the-neighbour-in-need of Christ and the-no-reward-expecting-giver of Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa says that "Love that freely giveth is the highest of love" (*TP* 10). One must not expect any reward from God for the services that he renders to him. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa says:
Everything can be realized simply through the love of God. If one is able to love God, one cannot look at anything – as mean. If a man sincerely loves God he must renounce everything. Dispassion comes like a flood and never like a drop. (TP 100)

Love makes man renounce everything and follow God. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa not only stressed the love of man to God, but also to his fellow-beings. His spiritual dictum was 'service to man is service to God'. Jesus Christ also preached that what is done to man is done to God. God in heaven is paid when man in need receives. As Christ himself put it, "[...] inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me" (Matt 25.40).

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has narrated many parables about man's love of God. The parable "The Wine of Heavenly Bliss" (TP 197) is about the taste of the love of God. A son asked his father to taste a little wine and then asked him to stop drinking. But when his father drank a little wine he found the taste good and so he said, "My son, if you want to give up drinking do it. But I am not going to stop drinking myself" (TP 197). Even though this parable is taken from real life, a very simple incident, yet it bears a deep spiritual truth. As long as one does not taste God, he cannot understand
God. But man when he tastes the love of God, he will never cease to love God.

5.5. Forgiveness – Repentance

Jesus Christ’s parables abound in the noble act of forgiveness, perhaps the rarest of the rarer virtues. Jesus himself came to this world for the sake of sinners, for he has said that ‘only a sick person needs a physician’ (Luke 5.31). His parables “The Prodigal Son”, “The Lost Sheep”, and “The Lost Coin” reveal the nobility of the act of forgiveness which entails a penitent heart bleeding for repentance. The prodigal son is forgiven by God when he feels a sense of remorse for his folly. It is this earnest act of repentance which ensures forgiveness as a gift of God. Similarly God is happy to get the lost sheep (sinner) and the lost coin (sinner). Forgiveness is, thus, one of the cardinal virtues, the parabolists seek to expound.

God's act of forgiveness is demonstrated in the parable of the “Prodigal Son”, where the prodigal son demands his father his share of property, receives it and squanders all the money living a very luxurious life. He enjoys life with his peers and friends and is left alone in this world. He goes in search of a job and later realizes his folly and returns to his father and gets
forgiveness. Similarly God is quite anxious about every single soul and he does not want that soul to perish. God’s love for man is shown in this parable, in the backdrop of the intimately homely father-son relationship.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parable “The Power of the Holy Name” (TP 98) points out how a king got forgiveness from God by uttering the holy name for killing the Brahmana. Chanting the holy name is repentance in the form of remission of one’s sins, the invidious act of commission and omission. The act of forgiveness is one of the cardinal themes in the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa for self-realization, and making amends for one’s sinful life.

5.6. Kingdom of God – Salvation

The kingdom of God and Salvation is a constant motif in the parabolic exposition of both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa for the simple reason that their entire earthly mission was to establish the kingdom of God on earth. “Let thy kingdom come” was the simple but apocalyptically perceptive prayer of Jesus Christ. Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa artistically elucidate the thematological perception of Father or Brahman. Both of them express the same truth. To both of them realization
of God and as a result the kingdom of God and salvation is possible, if one accepts God like a child. Jesus Christ called a little child and got him in the midst and said, “Verily I say unto you whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, he shall not enter therein” (Mark 10.15).

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parable “A Boy Actually Fed God” (TP 82) offers an excellent explanation for the faith of a child, the child-like faith. Even though the offering was offered before an idol, God could not tolerate the cry of the child and out of compassion He came down to eat the food offered by the child. Such a child-like faith one must have to attain salvation and to enter God’s kingdom. Again, in the parable, “A Faith of a Child” (TP 81), Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa tells the story of a boy who has to cross the wood to go to school. Heeding the advice of his mother to call Madhusudhana, his elder brother, while crossing the wood, the boy called and looked for his brother. But God appeared, took the boy through the wood and showed him the way. The child-like faith indeed is the spiritual passport and the sacred visa to enter the holy territory of the kingdom of God.

The parable of Jesus Christ makes it clear that during his second coming on the last Day of Judgment, the whole world will be destroyed and a new heaven and earth will be created. Jesus’ teachings through his parables,
is mainly concerned with the kingdom of God, ‘the new heaven and earth’. Through the parable “The Ten Virgins”, “The Wedding Garment” and the similitude of the “Mustard Seed and Heaven” Jesus offers his theological postulates on the kingdom of God.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables revolve round the kingdom of God in different ways. Yet they reveal the same truth as expressed by Jesus Christ. Almost all the parables of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa centre upon the kingdom of God. He expresses the fact that a self-righteous person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. What it obviously implies is that only the person with a penitent heart alone finds his berth in the kingdom of God. In the parable “Bhagavatha in the Ear” Sri Ramakrishna Pramahamsa poignantly drives home the message that a prostitute may go to heaven because she feels penitent and craves for repentance, but a self-righteous person may suffer in hell, because self-righteousness blinds his otherwise penitent-self and (mis) leads him to spiritual arrogance.

5.7. Devotion - Suffering

Devotion is a recurring motif in the parables of Jesus Christ. Without absolute dedication to God, one cannot attain salvation. For a believer what
ultimately matters is the cross, the struggle and the suffering. The crown of spiritual glory is simply not possible for Christ without the crown of earthly cross. That which makes a soul prepared to passively but cheerfully take to the life of the cross is the sense of devotion, that manifests in one's life for God and God's commandments.

Devotion also demands complete surrender to the will of God and total renunciation of the material prospects of the world. Christ’s parables “The Wedding Feast” (Mat.22:14, Luke 14:15-24), “The Talents” (Math 25:14-30) clearly explain the strong sense of devotion a man should possess to serve the Lord Almighty. Detachment thus complements devotion.

In the sense of detachment contributing to devotion, Ramakrishna’s parables also speak of devotion as a seminal factor in realizing the Almighty. Ramakrishna himself was a great devotee of Lord Siva and as a result whatever he talked about surrender to God was an impressively eloquent exposition of the spirit of devotion, which the Lord expects as the greatest response from man for His love. Thus both in Jesus Christ and Ramakrishna the doctrine of devotion as they conceived goes for beyond the human logic and the dry rationale of attempting to account for every spiritual phenomenon in a man’s life.
5.8. Renunciation – Detachment

Total renunciation is the sole spiritual credo for both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Jesus Christ taught his disciples to be completely detached from the worldly cares. And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you; it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19.24). Again I tell you “It is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matt 19.25). It would be difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God because he is not prepared to subject his soul and self to a sacrificial state of renunciation. When wealth becomes one’s god-idol and divine-icon renunciation is the inevitable casualty.

The parable of “The Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16.19-31) also drives home the same message but from a different perspective. Lazarus who was sitting at the feet of the rich man and ate the bits that fell from his table entered the kingdom of God, whereas the rich man suffered in hell even for want of water to wet his tongue. For the rich man, when he was alive, did not care for the cry of the poor as he was wallowing in wealth and worldly pleasures.
The disciples of Jesus Christ left the world and followed him and they became fishers of men instead of being fishers of the world. If one has to follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ, he must be completely detached from the world. If a man gives his heart to the world, gold and women, he cannot give his heart to God, for where his heart dwells there is his aspirations. Jesus Christ, the son of God, lived in this world, not corrupted by the world, as his life was one of absolute renunciation. Even Satan tempted Jesus Christ, but he was able to overcome the temptations of this world.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's parables explain the need for man to be completely detached from gold, women and wealth to attain Brahman. Detachment, to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, is total surrender to God, which helps one overcome the allurements and temptations of the material world. To Ramakrishna total detachment is a state of mind, a state of psychostasis in which the soul yearns for its maker, totally oblivious of the centrifugal pull of the inner-being by the material world and all its allurements in any form whatever including wealth or women.
5.9. The Second Coming – The Last Judgment

The Second Coming or The Last Day of Judgment is a seminal theological doctrine that Christ was trying to explain in the parables “The Ten Virgins” (Matt 25.1-13), “The Wedding Garment” (Matt 22.1-14), “The Wicked Tenants” (Mark 12.1-12), “The Talents” (Matt 25.14-30). The parable “The Ten Virgins” talks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when the bridegroom (God) will come to receive the bride (the people of this world), and when the bridegroom will give rewards according to their works. The Second Coming as a religious dogma, doctrinally asserts the need on the part of the congregation (the Church) and the individual believers to be ever prepared for ‘the new heaven and the earth’.

The notion of Second Coming or the Second Advent is quite alien to Indian theologico-philosophic discourse. Naturally, one finds no reference to Second Coming in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Ramakrishna, however, has alluded to the suffering that man will have in this world and, his purification by being born again and again till he attains the perfect state of purity of God, when he, for ever, will be united with the Divine Being, without being subjected to any more cycles of birth and death. This notion of the ultimate union with God, in a way, comes closer to the purified state a human person attains on the Second Coming of God.
5.10. Women and Wealth – Temptation and Fall

Jesus Christ looks upon women with reverence and what is strikingly remarkable is that, at a time when practically all religions looked down upon women as secondary citizens and temptresses, Christ raises his voice of women’s equality and gender justice. But the image of women as projected in the parable of Sri.Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is ambivalent and is very much a reflection of the cultural religiosities of his faith and of his times.

In many parables, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa discusses women and how men are slaves to woman. A Brahmin could not get a job through the manager, but got it through the manager’s wife. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa narrates a parable on adultery. Because of her conscience-stricken heart the woman reached heaven while the one who judged her to be a prostitute and hated her suffered in hell. According to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa a prostitute will be pardoned if she repents. But if a man is always jealous of the prostitute and has in his heart the lust and yearns for that to be fulfilled he will not be able to attain salvation. Ultimately what matters is not whether one is a man or a woman but whether he is repentant or not.

In an almost similar situation when a woman caught in the act of adultery was brought to Jesus Christ, he pardons her because she had a
penitent heart. Christ could easily turn the table back upon those men who showed their dirty little accusing finger against the woman and make them realize that they are greater sinners than the woman was. Although Jesus had no parable relating to woman except the “Ten Virgins”, the overall message one could discern from his parables and his association with women is that it is not at all similar to that of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, as it relates to women as temptresses and the cause of man’s fall. Christ’s treatment of women is a bold reinterpretation and a restatement of the ‘fall-story’ of the Book of Genesis when he, as the Son of God, restores equal rights and equal privileges for women with men.

Christ does not deify woman, nor does he condemn them like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. There are clever as well as foolish women just as there are clever as well as foolish men, which are well brought out in the parable “The Ten Virgins”. Here in this parable Christ symbolically presents the ten virgins as two sets of people, one prepared to meet the bridegroom, the other unprepared and therefore could not reach heaven. Jesus Christ did not sideline or discriminate women. Even though they were not among his twelve disciples, he was always followed by women disciples as well. Even after his resurrection he appeared only before Mary Magdalene, which proves that the
message of his resurrection was given to the world through a woman. Women seem to be silent supporters helping him in spreading the Gospel.

Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had women devotees. Jesus Christ had women devotees like Mary, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary.

And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance (Luke 8.2,3).

Jesus had broken the gender injustice particularly in his discourse with Samaritan woman. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa looked upon women with a pure heart. He saw the divine mother in every woman. He worshipped even his wife, one of his devotees later known as the holy mother. In short, his life was his parable and his parable was his life and his views of women as objects of temptation and allurement is more symbolic than crudely matter of fact.

5.11. Force of Evil – Eternal Damnation

Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have focused on the force of the evil in their parables. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parable
“Enmeshed in Maya Brahman Weeps” (TP 47) shows how God incarnates to destroy the demon. “In the Forest of the World” (TP 2), talks of the forces of evil, Tamas, Rajas and Satva which bind man as the distracters of man away from the light of God. The forces of evil, to Ramakrishna Paramahamsa consist in gold, women and wealth of this world. They deprive man of the God-given privilege of realising the Absolute.

“The Root of All Trouble” (TP 17) is a parable that lays bare the pathetic state of man when he becomes a prey to the lust and pleasures of this world. “The Jar of Desire Can Never be Filled Up” (TP 26), in a similar way, dissects the evil force in man that prevents him from experiencing the love of God and man is caught in the evil trap of desire or greed for wealth.

Jesus Christ’s teachings always warned man about the evil force or Satan who tries to tempt man by offering pleasures of this world. But references to the forces of the evil are interspersed with the other thematic expositions in the parables of Jesus Christ. “The Prodigal Son” (Luke 15.11-32) shows how the prodigal son, bound by the force of evil, goes after the lust and pleasures of this world and loses himself until such time when he is restored by his father. But when he repents he is released from the forces of evil.
"The Sower and the Seed" and "The Wheat and the Tares" admonishingly illustrate the role played by the devil in two different ways. In "The Sower and the Seed" Satan picks up the word of God. In "The Wheat and the Tares" (Matt 13.24-30) Satan sows his seeds in the world. Satan, as the instrument of the force of evil, sows sin and wickedness in the heart of the people on the one hand, and on the other, he surreptitiously takes away (picks up) the good in man through allurements and worldly pleasures. The force of evil thus becomes a common denominator, in both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, that prevents man from attaining self-actualisation.

5.12. Guru - Teacher

Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa hold that a man cannot perform his life's mission without his vision and commission from God. Guru or Teacher is the one who puts the human person on the paths of Brahman, and shows the way, leads the way and lives the way. In other words, Guru is the ideal, the role model worthy of emulation. Guru inspires, guru transforms, which no one else except the guru alone can do it because he is knowledge and realization personified. And the ignorant cannot be the guru at all.
As Jesus Christ succinctly puts it “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6.39, TP 211), “Never Can One Serve Two Masters” (TP 247). “No man can serve two masters for either he will hate one and love the other, or else, will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6.24). In the parable “If You must Serve, Serve but One Master”, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has stressed the need for a model guru to shape one’s life which will lead to the realization of the self.

A guru must set himself as a model, an ideal example. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables “The Physician with a Jar of Molasses” (TP 209), “One Cannot Teach Others without Receiving Commission from God” (TP 211), “Like Teacher, Like Disciple” (TP 219) clearly illustrate the role-model of a guru and the socio-spiritual imperatives a guru must follow and uphold in order that he can pass for a guru. The physician set himself an ideal model by teaching his disciples not to eat molasses only after he himself stopped doing it. A guru thus preaches what he practises and practises what he preaches. Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have laid the path for a guru or a devotee to follow and they themselves have loved an ideal life as a guru and a true devotee of God.
5.13. Yoga – Discipline

Yoga is essentially an oriental religious concept. It is the spiritual doctrine which finds its evolutionary expression in the Indian philosophic tradition and the Indian philosophic systems. Thus, yoga as the parabolic theme is an instance of the parabolist-exclusive-specific of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

Even as Sri Ramakrishna talks of the spiritual imperative of the yoga in leading the life of discipline, dedication and unity he is not blind to the darker or negative side of the yogi as well. Yoga as a mental strategy for spiritual meditation and psycho-physical equilibrium would degenerate into a mechanical physical exercise if the yogi drifts away from his path and succumbs to the temptations of the material world.

Thus the message of Ramakrishna is that yoga in itself is not a spiritual guarantee for salvation. Yoga, on the other hand, is but a means to achieve external bliss if it is deep rooted in self-actualization and self-realisation born as a result of internalizing God’s purpose in man’s life.
Yoga, being a spirituo-culture-specific eastern religious doctrine, does not find any covert echo in the parabolic teachings of Jesus Christ. But when Christ in his teachings talks about the constant need for prayer and offering worship to God with one's heart, mind and soul, that is, a state of total surrender resulting from total discipline of all the senses and inner being, he was, in a way, preaching his disciples and followers a-near-yoga-like method of concentration of the mind and the spirit for the realization of the ultimate, God the Almighty.

5.14. Maya – The Unreal

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has stressed the necessity of yoga and the divine play of Maya to fulfil her vision. Jesus Christ hardly ever talks about maya which is fundamentally an oriental spiritual precept. In his preaching Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa demonstrated through his parables that everything existing in Maya will be destroyed. In the parable “The Prolonged Dream that we Call Life” (TP 52), Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa reveals the philosophical truth about the unreal state of maya. Atman alone is eternal which has to be united with Brahman. But it is not easy, for it lingers even after the attainment of knowledge, that even incarnations of God accept maya to fulfil the mission of God on earth.
There is no direct reference to the doctrine of *Maya* in the parables of Jesus Christ. But Christ may be interpreted to have emphasized the *Maya*-like notion possibly in a different sense, that is, in the sense of being 'illusory'. To attain salvation, one must seek God in such a way that one, with God's abiding grace, gets over the sense of illusion that engulfs him in the world of darkness and ignorance.

There are many other parables Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa which discuss the diverse dimensions of *maya*. "Enmeshed in *Maya Brahman Weeps*, "How is *Maya*, "Such Indeed is *Maya*, "*Maya Vanishes the Moment it is Known", "The Prolonged Dream that We Call Life", "Its Nothing, Its Nothing" and "Its all Really Unreal" (*TP* 147-155) are a few that throw light on *maya*. In the parable "Such Indeed is *Maya*, one day Narada besieged the Lord of the Universe to show his 'Maya of Thine', which can make the impossible possible. To this Lord nodded his head. One day the Lord went with Narada. On the way he felt very thirsty and fatigued. So he sat down and asked Narada to bring water from somewhere.

Narada went in search of water and he saw a river. When he went near he saw a beautiful lady and she began to talk to him. Both of them fell in love with each other and they got married and he lived happily with his wife and
children. Soon in the country there came pestilence and so lot of people in that country died. So Narada took his wife and children to another country. On the way they had to cross a bridge. A great flood came and all his children and his wife were swept away by the flood. Narada sat and wept piteously and the Lord appeared before Narada and asked for water. Then Narada realized his folly and his service to God to fetch water for him so as to quench his thirst and said: “Lord, my obeisance to thee, and my obeisance also to Thy wonderful Maya” (TP 51). Mysterious are the workings of Maya.

One, unaware of his mission, becomes a slave to Maya, the lusts and the green pastures of this world. “The Prolonged Dream that We Call Life” is a parable which discusses this aspect of Maya. A farmer lived in a country. He was a real jnani. He got married and a son was born to him. He named him as Hanu. One day while he was working in the farm his neighbours came to him and told him that Hanu had an attack of cholera. Hanu was taken for treatment. But he died and the members of the family and his wife wept bitterly. But the farmer did not weep. His wife asked him why he did not shed tear for the child. The farmer said that he had a dream and in the dream he saw that he was a king with eight children. When he woke up he thought whether he should weep for the eight sons or for Hanu. The jnani knew that
the waking state is as unreal as the dream state. There is only one eternal substance and that is the *Atman*.

If *maya* can be considered as a divine play, then perhaps some of the parables of Jesus Christ, may be interpreted as espousing the doctrine of *maya*, although it might sound too far-fetched and simplistic. *Maya* is thus illusion that blinds human soul to the rich possibilities of the saving grace of God the Almighty. The rich man or the rich fool in parables of “The Rich Man and Lazarus” and “The Rich Fool” are engulfed by *maya* and as a result the rich man and rich fool are totally immersed in their lust for wealth which denies them redemption, the free gift of God. The prodigal son loses his happiness because he is led by the *maya* of the lusts and pleasures of this world. But when he repents he is blessed abundantly. In short, one may argue, though not always convincingly that there are traces of the teachings on the existence of *maya* in Jesus Christ, but in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the doctrine of *maya*, as an oriental religious belief, finds its fullest expression.

5.15. Occult Powers – Vainglory / Victory

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa does not always uphold occult powers. Sometimes, as he avers, they are more a hindrance than a help to realize God's
vision. In the parable “Occult Powers are more a Hindrance than a Help to God’s Vision”, there is a story about a *Siddha* who has great occult powers, who could kill an elephant and then bring it back to life. But unless the occult powers one possesses bring about his own self-actualisation on the one hand, and on the other, bring about the common good of the suffering humanity at large, one’s occult power does not serve the purpose of God. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, though he is very much against the religious misuse of occult powers, he has stressed the power of the name of God which can perform great miracles.

Entire resignation and absolute faith in God are at the root of all miraculous deeds. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa not only emphasizes the evil of having occult powers but also points out the importance of faith to perform a miracle. In the parable “A Siddha Stopped the Storm” (*TP* 56), the *Siddha* was selfish because he stopped the storm which disturbed his calmness on the seashore. But it caused the destruction of a lot of people.

In the parable “Faith is the Mother of Miracles” (*TP* 96), however, Sri Ramakrishna points out that a poor woman whose earning was by selling milk could be benefited by uttering the name of the Lord and could cross the river. This parable clearly shows that miracle is a necessary thing for her. Thus, Sri
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has portrayed through his parables two contrary spiritual truths.

To Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa to perform miracles would be of no avail because one does not realize God in one’s soul by performing miracles. In the parable, “A Siddha Stops a Storm” (TP 56), Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa points out that a siddha stopped a storm by his occult powers; but had to suffer in hell because of killing many people, who were sailing in the ship. The question of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is “What does a man gain by having occult powers?” Do you feel uplifted by it? Has it enabled you to realize God? (TP 56). Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa holds that occult powers are more a hindrance than a help in realizing God’s vision.

The parable “She is so Well Off” (TP 64) shows that people with little occult powers gain such things as name and fame. Many of them want to follow the profession of a guru, gain recognition and make disciples and devotees. And this is what people say about such a Guru:

Ah! he is having a wonderful time. How many people visit him, he has many disciples and followers. His house is overflowing with furniture and other things. People give him presents, he has
such power that he can feed many people [...]. He is a great man

(TP 64).

One may be able to gain fame and he may be well-off if he has the occult powers. But it does not give any benefit to the soul. He may be uplifted physically with wealth and riches, but he loses his soul. Those who believe in such occult powers and follow the persons having occult powers will suffer in hell because they have lost their soul. The dweller in the body, the soul is very important to man. This truth is pointed out by Jesus Christ also. "For what shall a man gain; if he gains the whole world and loses his soul" (Matt 16.26).

Jesus Christ also has similar views about occult powers. He emphasizes the importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit more than the gifts of performing miracles. Without realization of God, occult powers are absolutely of no avail. He said to his disciples:

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you depart from me ye that work iniquity (Matt 7.22-23).
What really matters to both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is the pure heart, noble deeds and genuine concern for one’s fellow-beings, all in the realization of God. That is why the teachings of Christ is reflected and reinforced by St. Paul when he emphatically asserted, “But the fruits of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance against such there is no law” (Gala 5.22-23).

What a marvelous coincidence that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa literally echoes Christ as regards external embellishments like occult powers and miracles. Here are the words of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa “Fruits first, flowers next”. In other words, the similarity between Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa as regards occult powers goes far beyond the temporal and spiritual specifics that to a certain extent conditioned their religious ideologies and magnificently projects the unity of vision of these two avatars of God.

5.16. Unity of Religions – Harmonious Co-existence

Unity of religions is the parabolist-exclusive-specific of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. All through his ministry Ramakrishna
persuasively preached the gospel of the unity of religions. What really matters in the sight of God is not whether one is a Christian or a Muslim or a Hindu but whether as a Christian, as a Hindu and as a Muslim one carries out in his earthly life God’s purpose. Spirituality is thus a transcendent reality which lies far beyond the geo-political, socio-cultural and religio-philosophic boundaries within which man tries to circumscribe his religious belief and religious life.

In all his parabolic expositions Ramakrishna thus preached the gospels of a unified vision which will result from the unification of the diverse religious beliefs, doctrines, ideologies and more than anything else the tender sensitive religious sensibilities. Ramakrishna’s parabolic beliefs thus contribute to the silent revolution of evolving a harmonious community rooted in peaceful, pluralistic co-existence.

It is true that Jesus Christ did not covertly preach the gospel of the unity of religions for the simple reason that Jesus’s mission was not concerned with and confined to any religion at all. His was a universal vision and his religion was equally universal in perception and practice. In his parables “Good Samaritan”, the “Sower and the Seed” “The Rich man and Lazarus” and in his general homilies on love and peace, Christ was obviously talking about the state of human existence in which all man-made differences
spontaneously disappear into a unified human-whole which is the unity of mankind based on the unity of vision. In other words, both Christ and Ramakrishna preached a sort of unity of religion based on the bedrock of love, peace and understanding of one another.

Jesus Christ came to this world to show the way to attain Salvation and he has said “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6), while Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa preached to bring unity among all religions. Swami Abhadananda says:

Sri Ramakrishna went beyond the boundary of orthodox Hinduism following the Christian and Islamic method of worship. By practising all these various kinds of sadhanas Sri Ramakrishna realized the ideals of all sectarian religious and discovered that the goal of each of them was the realization of the one Infinite Being by various names that all like all sectarian religious were like so many paths which lead to the same God (17).

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is a godly man who has practised all the religions and has experienced the love of God in the name of Kali, Krishna, the Buddha and the Christ. He is one whose endeavour was to bring
unity among all religions. A house has different doors, and one can use any
door to enter the house. Similarly, according to Sri Ramakrishna
Paramahamsa different paths lead to the same goal. In his parable, “How
They Quarrel” he points out how each one claims his religion to be true and
how people quarrel among one another.

5.17. Rebirth - Transfiguration

Rebirth or the cycle of birth and death is an accepted belief of the
Hindus and many parables Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa explain the effect
of Karma on man. Jesus Christ has a different notion of rebirth and Jesus
Christ speaks of a born-again experience, that is, even during the course of his
life on earth, one must be spiritually purified and have a new life. Jesus Christ
evidently has not spoken about the kind of cyclic rebirth one finds in
Ramakrishna’s parables. But there is the possibility of the other interpretation
as well. As Swami Trigunanantha rightly observes:

Christians say that we cannot be born again [. . .]. In the Bible,
if we read the Bible very clearly, we can find that somewhere in
Matthew it is said that Elia came again and Christ meant – in the
body of John the Baptist. If Christ had no belief in the
transfiguration of the soul in rebirth, how could he have said that
Elia would come in the body of John the Baptist (856).

Swami Trigunantha was evidently referring to the transfiguration
experience of Christ as recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

But I say to you that Elijah has come already and they did not
know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the
son of man is also about to suffer at their hands. Then the
disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptist
(Matt 17:12,13).

This verse makes the reader/listener feel that Elijah has come again as
John the Baptist (Matt 17.12,13). Therefore, one may be tempted to aver that
Jesus Christ must have revealed about rebirth in his teachings. But if we
carefully analyse Jesus’ notion of born-again experience, it becomes
incontrovertibly evident that he was only talking about a total transformation
of the human person from a life of sinfulness to a life of repentance and purity.
As Jesus Christ himself says "that which is born of the flesh shall be flesh and
that which is born of spirit shall be spirit" (Matt 17.1-8, Mark 9.2-13, Luke
9.28-36, John 3.1-16). It is the spiritual transformation that forms the core of
Christ's born-again experience. The reference to Elijah and John the Baptist is only to maintain the sacred traditional continuity in retrospect.

We, therefore, cannot affirm with certainty that Jesus Christ spoke about rebirth or the transfiguration of the soul here. To Jesus Christ, to be born-again means 'a complete change in the life of man'. His heart is completely changed, when he repents his sin and accepts God as his Saviour. His former life is transformed and he turns over a new leaf.

But Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables talk of rebirth in the sense of the cycle of birth and death as instanced by the Law of Karma. In the Bhagavath Gita, Arjuna stands before his benefactors with a question whether he should proclaim the battle or not. Krishna exhorts Arjuna that he should fight for dharma because mainly on account of his leading a virtuous life in his previous birth, he is now born in the present life as a soldier. Thus it is the law of Karma that he is called upon to at once obey and uphold. The same experience is recounted through the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha which affirm rebirth. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa does not find any discrimination between an animal and man; by showing discrimination man cannot attain Brahman.
Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has often reached the *Samadhi* stage while singing, while preaching to his disciples. This experience is seen in the transformation experience of Jesus Christ with his disciples Peter, James and John on the mountain (Matt 17.1-9). This transformation achieved by Jesus Christ and his disciples can be considered to be the *Samadhi* stage. They have lost the consciousness of their nature in flesh and are transformed to the spirit form. This is the same state of man when he reaches the *Samadhi* stage. He becomes united with God in body, soul and spirit.

Weston, in one of his recent studies, convincingly argues that transfiguration is seen in the teachings of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa:

Transfiguration [...] is only possible if the pure light has taken on a familiar form and then again became pure light. The kingdom of the spirit then replace the kingdom of the son, the transfiguration finally became so intense, clarity remain the clarity of formless spirit, Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Ramakrishna all faces of the spirit of Bhakta does not object of the excessive clarity in insence of what discernible features (93).
Weston goes on to argue that both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have had the unique divine experience of transfiguration.

Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna have undergone transfiguration and they have instructed through their parables the importance of transfiguration or the reaching the pure state when man attains the divine state. One may think that transfiguration is impossible for a man living in this world. When a man has overcome the temptations of this world he reaches the divine stage of being united with God. This can be said to be the state of transfiguration [. . . ] yet even here, on Mount Tabor (83).

5.18. Yearning – Vision/Revelation

Yearning is an irresistible quest of the human soul. The theme of yearning finds the fullest expression in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables such as “To have Genuine Yearning for God to Attain Him” (TP 127), “The Divine Yearning” (TP 128), “If You are Earnest” (TP 129) and “How a Guru Taught His Disciple to See God” (TP 136). The parable “To have Genuine Yearning for God is to Attain Him” is a story of a girl who had real yearning to see God. A man had a daughter who was a widow. When the
girl saw the other girls with their husbands she asked her father where her husband had gone. The father replied that her husband was Govinda and if she called his name he would appear before her. So the girl went into the room, closed the door and started calling Govinda. “O Govinda, come to me! Show yourself to me! Why don’t you come!” (TP 127). God could not resist the girls piteous cry and appeared before her.

In the parable “The Divine Yearning”, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa brings out the yearning of a child to seek God. Only when the desires of women and gold come to an end one can ‘yearn like a child’ to see God. When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa lived in Kamarpukur the son of Hirday, who was five years old, went to him. He was playing with toys and he completely forgot about his mother. But when evening came he could not wait any longer. He wanted to see his mother at once. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa tried to cajole him but still he started crying to see his mother. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa narrated this real incident in his life which taught him a lesson. He says:

One should cry for God that way, like a child. That is what it means to be restless for God. One doesn’t enjoy play or food any longer. After one’s experiences of the world are over, feels this restlessness and weeps for God. (TP 128).
That one must yearn like a child to see God is the overall message. Yearning is the fundamental pre-requisite for God’s vision. Jesus Christ too has emphasized in his teachings the same idea of yearning like a child to have the divine revelation, although there are not any parables which deal with the theme of yearning. But the idea of yearning is very much implied in quite a few parables of Christ, which speak of the human-person’s passion for realising the Supreme Reality.

5.19. Incarnation - Avatars

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the incarnate of God, devotes a few parables to fathom the meaning of the incarnation of God. A gnani finds out that there is no incarnation of God. In the parable “Thus Saw Arjuna” (TP 181), Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa narrates a story of Krishna. Krishna took Arjuna out and showed him a tree. He asked Arjuna what was hanging on the tree. Arjuna said black fruits were hanging on the tree. Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to go near and see. Arjuna said that he saw Krishnas hanging on the tree. He pointed out when one comes nearer to God or attains the gnani state he sees many Krishnas.
In the parable “Enmeshed in Maya Brahman Weeps” (TP 47), Brahman sends Vishnu incarnated as a sow to destroy the demon. After fulfilling the mission he was taken back to heaven. The spiritual truth is that God sometimes sends his people to the world incarnated to execute the mission. The doctrine of incarnation, in the sense it is employed in the Vedanta philosophy, is quite alien to the Christian doctrine of God-incarnate. As Hans Torweston rightly points out, “For the Christian the real stumbling-block in the Vedanta teaching – especially in regard to incarnation is perhaps the teaching on Maya” (22).

5.20. Chanting Holy Name – Purging Sin

The ‘Name of God’ and the spiritual significance of uttering the holy name is a key religious concept expounded by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in his parables. “That Great Devotee of a Crow” (TP 105) presents a crow that uttered the name of Rama. Rama and Lakshmana visited Pampa Lake. Lakshmana saw a crow very eager for water. Again and again it went to the edge of the water but would not drink. Lakshmana asked Rama about it. Rama said, “Brother, this crow is a great devotee of God. Day and night it repeats the name of Rama. If that is parched with thirst, but it won’t drink for fear of missing a repetition of Rama’s ‘name’” (TP 106).
The parable “The Power of the Holy Name” (TP 98) brings out the power of God’s name in purging the sin of man. A king killed a Brahmana and he went to the Rishi to find out the penance he must perform to get purified from the sin that he has committed. The Rishi had gone out when the king came to the hermitage. He asked his son and the son replied to utter the name of Rama three times. But when the Rishi heard about the son’s advice to the king, he called his son a fool and said that the name of Rama could, when uttered once, purge the sin from birth and the son was left as an outcast.

The chanting of the holy name contributes to spiritual concentration, single-minded devotion and unification of sensibilities. Thus, the constant chanting of sacred names transports the human soul into the world of spiritual agony and divine ecstasy that leads to the purging of one’s soul of all the sin that one has committed or it helps to maintain the psychic poise of the human soul. Jesus Christ obviously had an altogether different perception of the chanting of the holy names. Without performing the will of God on earth, if one keeps chanting the name of God, God will not respond to his prayer or call (Matt 25.31-46).
5.21. Humility – Divinity in Action

Humility is divinity in action. Humility is a rarer virtue. As T.S. Eliot in his poetic meditation “East Coker” proclaims humility is the only wisdom that mankind has acquired over the years and humility is endless and humility is eternal. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parable “It is not Easy to Attain Humility” (TP 134) presents a man who thinks he is humble and at last realizes his real nature. He went to a Sadhu and asked him what he should do to be saved. The Sadhu asked him to bring a thing that is nearer than him. He went in search of it and at last took his own excrement and brought it to the Sadhu. When the Sadhu stretched his hand to take it he heard a voice say not to take it.

The man in person had a sweet and delicious cake fit to be offered to the gods and in appearances pleasing to all the spectators. But his ill fortune brought him to the dirty contact and he had been reduced to such a detestable condition that men run away from him with face turning and kerchiefs covering their nose. The man was thus taught true humility and became the humblest of the humble. As a result he attained the higher perfection. Sri
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, thus, sees humility as the gateway to self-realisation.

Jesus Christ often stresses in his teachings the necessity of being humble, that those who exalted will be made low and the low will be exalted. The parable of "The Rich Fool" and the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" are indeed in the powerful parabolic expressions of the meaning of humility. The rich fool went to Jesus Christ and asked him what he should do to be saved. He was self-righteous and so his surmise was that following all the commandments of God even from childhood would fetch him salvation. But Jesus Christ asked him to sell all his riches and give it to the poor and then humble himself to attain salvation. This did not please the rich man and so he went away. His self-righteousness and unconquerable pride prevented him from realising the need for humility in one's life.

Again in the parable "The Rich Man and Lazarus" the rich man suffers in hell when he dies, but Lazarus, being very poor and humble, though sits at the feet of the rich man and eats the bits of bread that falls from his table, his suffering as well as his humility in this world takes him to heaven and he enjoys eternal life. Thus, to Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa
humility is the glorious reflection of the divinity in man and humility, in essence, is divinity in action.

5.22. Man - Man in Divine State

Man in divine state is one of the central motifs in the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa since practically all parables deal with man and man’s relationship with God.\footnote{Sri Ramakrishna’s parables “The Wine of Heavenly Bliss” (TP 197), “They Wander in Many Disguises” (TP 197), “Sri Sankara and the Butcher” (TP 208), “In the Divine State” (TP 205), “The Nature of Paramahamsa” (TP 207), “The Wine of Heavenly Bliss” (TP 197), “The Wanderer in many Disguises” (TP 197), “On Company of the Holy” (TP 205), “Vishnu Everywhere” (TP 199), “Where is the Misery for Him Who Sees the One Both Friend and Foe the Saintist Adore” (TP 200), “Childlike should be the Man of Highest Wisdom” (TP 203), “She Behaves in a Quiet Way” (TP 204), “On Company of the Holy” (TP 205), “In the Divine State” (TP 205), “The Nature of a Paramahamsa” (TP 207) and “Sri Sankara and the Butcher” (TP 208) deal with man and man in divine state.} Sri Ramakrishna’s Paramahamsa’s parables “The Nature of Paramahamsa” focuses on the diverse dimensions of man in the divine state. When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was staying in Kamarpukar with Shivaram, he was four or five years old. Shivaram was one day trying to catch the grasshopper. But the leaves were moving and he said “Hush! Hush! I want to catch the grasshopper” (TP 207). Again one day there was rain, thunder and lightning and Shivaram wanted to go out. But Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa scolded him and prevented him from going out. But now and then he would peep out and say “There uncle! They are striking matches again” (TP 207). The Paramahamsa is like a five-
year old child. He sees everything filled with consciousness and a child-like consciousness is the manifestation of man in divine state.

In the parable, "Childlike should be the Man of Highest Wisdom", Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa brings home the message that if one attains the divine state he becomes like a child. Once a Sanyasini came to the Royal Court of Janaka. To her the king bowed, without looking at her face. Seeing this the Sanyasini said, "How strange it is O Janaka, that you have still so much fear of woman" (TP 203).

When one attains a divine state, full jnana, one's nature becomes like that of a little child, a state in which one sees no distinction between male and female. This is a state of spiritual equilibrium when the so-called man-made differences dissolve into a universal whole. The fragmented, disintegrated self enjoys the unity of wholeness. The divine state, thus makes man, totally detached and enables him to shower his love and affection on the entire mankind as his own self. In short, a man begins to love his neighbour as himself in the divine state.

Jesus Christ's parable "The Good Samaritan" describes a man with the divine love, an earthly manifestation of divine state which prompted the Good
Samaritan to stop and take care of the wounded traveller. He nursed him and took him to a hospital and met all the expenses. Jesus Christ has emphasized that one must become like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. The divine nature of man reveals man as the temple of the living God and so in a state of divinity in man there is absolutely no room for any blemish or any evil-thought or wicked-doing. Man reaches out to the needy and the marginalized. The man in the divine state is, thus, not in a state of inaction but becomes a performer and the executor of the will of God on earth.

Almost all parables of Jesus Christ are related to man, about his preparedness to meet God as in “The Ten Virgins”, “Who is Your Real Neighbour?” and “The Good Samaritan”. The real nature of man is seen in the parable of “The Two Debtors” who do not forgive each other. The parable “Two Houses” teaches that a man must have his faith deeply rooted in the rock of Christ. Then he will stand firm for the glory of God.

Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have defined man as the holy image of God. God dwells in the heart of man. As Apostle Paul has remarked, “You are the temple of the living God” (1 Cor 3.16,17). In addition, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables deal with different categories of human beings, that is the man, who is bound by the fetters of this
world, the man who is free from the world and man who has the mind to escape from the world. A man who is completely freed from the fetters of this world enjoys Brahman. Until one renounces the ego one does not possess the grace of God. Ego is satanic which separates man from God. If he thinks that it is he who performs such great miracles and everything is done because of him, he is away from God and, ‘me’ dominates.

The parables of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa advise men to be cautious of women and gold which are obstacles to reach Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa repeatedly stresses, “One cannot see God if one has the slightest touch of worldliness [. . . ] One cannot attain the knowledge of Brahman unless one is extremely cautious about women” (Swami Nikhlananda 28).

The parable “They were in Many Disguises” (TP 197) reveals the real state of man when he realises God. Once a god-intoxicated Sadhu went to the Kali temple. He felt very hungry, but he did not feel like asking anyone for food. After the feast the remains of the food were thrown out and a dog was eating it. The sadhu went and embraced the dog and ate with it. After eating the sadhu went inside the temple and prayed so that his prayer was a thrill throughout the temple. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa asked Hirday to follow
the sadhu and find out from him the spiritual truth he conveyed. When Hirday followed the sadhu, the sadhu asked him why he followed. Hirday asked him to teach and he said:

When the water in the ditch and the yonder Ganges appear as one and the same in your sight, when the sound of the flageold and the sound of the crowd have no distinction to your ear, then man has reached the state of true knowledge.

So saying the sadhu hastened away. When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa heard this from Hirday he remarked, "That man has reached the true state of ecstasy; the true state of knowledge" (TP 198).

When a man reaches the divine state he sees no difference between a dog and a human being. He has reached the state of ecstasy. Perhaps the peak of the divinity of man is the state of ecstasy, when man's union with the divine makes him the purer being in whom there hardly exists joy or sorrow, fear or favour, love or hate, but a state of equanimity in which man becomes 'the doer of divine will', unmindful of its fruits.

5.23. Christ – Sri Ramakrishna

The life of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa manifests a unity of vision and harmonious spiritual perception for the well-being of the
human person. Their life itself was an example of the message they preached. Both Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa were preachers who led a witnessing life reflecting the spiritual aura of God, the Father.

The parabolists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa preached through their parables, not only the spiritual truth but also the social and moral values. It can be inferred that both of them were persuasively powerful moralist-preachers trying to bring socio-religious reformation and new spiritual birth in the hearts of the people.

Jesus Christ’s parables belong to the remote past while Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables are historically very recent. A deep comprehensive survey of their parables clearly points to the fact that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables have the tinge and flavour of Jesus Christ’s parables. What is indeed remarkable is that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has a thorough knowledge of the parables of Jesus Christ, and naturally the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa show close resemblance both in substance and form.

But this is not to say that there are not any differences in the major themes expounded by Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in their
parables. The differences basically relate to the thematological expositions of women and gold, yoga, maya, rebirth, guru, incarnation, unity of religion, which are not spiritual universals but socio-historical, religio-theological and philosophico-cultural specifics. In other words, insofar as the themes relating to universal religious, spiritual and ethical values are concerned, there is a greater degree of commonness in the parabolic treatment of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa because of the unity of vision and the commonness of mission they, as men of God, brought to mankind for its liberation.

Jesus Christ has emphasized the spiritual truth that “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14.6). But Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa presented the different ways that lead to the same goal and his main teaching is the unity of all religions. Their message about God, Kingdom of God, faith, love, renunciation, devotion, forgiveness, humility, and God-man relationship have left indelible impressions in the minds of ordinary men and women and in kindling the spiritual fire in them.

Jesus Christ has conveyed the truth covering almost all the major themes, interspersed in all his parables. But Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has presented each and every spiritual truth in the form of a parable. Sri
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, in addition, has enlightened the hearts of the readers/listeners with parables dealing with themes like occult powers, humility, men in divine state, aspects of the Divine, yearning, Incarnation, *Maya*, *Yoga*, *Guru*, world and touched on rebirth, although not in separate parables.

The thematological comparison clearly points to the fact that there is an astonishingly greater degree of one to one correspondence between the parable teachings of Jesus Christ and Sri. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, basically because of the unity of vision they brought to bear on the entire mankind. Since the unity of vision is one of gradual liberation of the human soul for its ultimate union with the oversoul, it assumes a universal dimension transcending all man-made differences of caste, creed, colour and faith. And it is this universal perception of looking upon man as man and his need for salvation by the immeasurable mercy and abiding grace of God that, in turn, lends divine credence to the glorious unity of vision in the parabolic teachings of Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.