A true parable is something more than a mere felicitous illustration. It is an outward symbol of an inward reality.

- William M. Taylor

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Chapter Two

The Parable in a Nutshell

The parables quicken the understanding by putting truth in a vivid way, but always they are designed to challenge men, to action – to make men 'do the truth'.

- A.M. Hunter

2.1. The Parable

The parabolists Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa employed the parabolic method so as to make the readers/listeners grasp their message with effortless ease as well as to make their homilies or, preachings as it were, absorbingly effective and artlessly interesting. Necessity urged them to take to the parabolic method and Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have forcefully put to use the parable-strategy in such a way that, not only the educated but also the uneducated/unlettered could comprehend the meaning even if it is read or heard just once.

The parabolic method has taken its subtle artistic shape and form and undergone a sort of religio-literary metamorphosis and reached its pinnacle in the hands of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. In a way, the parabolic method helped both Christ and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa to maintain the continuity of the socio-religious traditions as reflected in the Old
Testament of the Holy Bible and the Hindu Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha respectively.

For a study of the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, it is necessary to have a glimpse of the meaning of the word 'parable', its etymology and ramifications. A parable can very well be defined as a short narrative bearing a moral. It is a simple means of conveying a single truth. In order to understand the real significance of the term 'parable', the definitions of the parable as attempted by Bradley would be very much in order.

According to Bradley, "A parable can be defined as a comparison, a similitude, any saying or narrative in which something is explained in the form of something else" (57). That is, a parable makes use of a comparison or similitude to express an intended didactic message. Bradley says further, "A parable is a fictitious narrative or allegory" (57). A parable is also defined as a medium used to explain a practical truth through resemblances. "It is a description of a subject under the guise of some other subject which aptly provides suggestive resemblance" (Bradley 8).

To make this point more clear, it can be illustrated with the artistic skill of a painter. A painter paints the face of a man shining like a star. Here is a
comparison between the man’s face and the sky. Comparison involves resemblance. And in this case the resemblance is between the man’s face and the star in the sky. The parabolist invents imaginary stories and aptly employs them to convey some ‘spiritual truth’. Thus a parabolist holds the mirror up to nature by portraying the facts in a realistic way with a view to imparting ‘divine truth’ to the readers/listeners.

In other words, it is the comparison which is the seminal component of the parable. Taylor makes it clear while offering the following descriptive-definition for the parable:

> Parable is a term of teaching. ‘Almost all teaching’, Dean Inge has said, ‘consists of comparing the unknown with the known, the strange with the familiar’. It is a matter of everyday experience that you can hardly explain anything at all except by saying that it is like something else, something more familiar (8).

Taylor further elaborates the notion of comparison as applied, in all its ramifications, to the parable which is indeed self-explanatory and picturesquely descriptive. And on the basis of his explanation Taylor identifies
the three-fold classifications of the parable into three classes: the parable, the similitude and the metaphor.

In German, then, a parable is a figurative saying: sometimes a simile (‘Be wise as serpents’), sometimes a metaphor (‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees’). What we call parables are simply expansions of these. ‘All we like sheep have gone astray’ is a simile. Expand it into a picture and you get a similitude like “The Lost Sheep”. Expand it into a story by using past tenses and circumstantial details, and you get a story-parable like “The Prodigal Son”. The difference between a similitude and a story-parable is this: Whereas the similitude bases itself on some familiar truth or process (like putting a patch on a garment of leaven into meal), the story-parable describes not what men commonly do but what one man did. ‘A sower went out to sow’. ‘A certain man made a great supper’. If you want a rough grammatical test, you may say that the first class – figurative sayings – have only one verb, the second class – similitudes – more than one verb, in a present tense, whereas the third class – story-parables – have a series of verbs, all in the past tense (9).
Peter Ribbes looks at parables from an altogether different perspective and argues how the parables are culturally unconditioned, universal and eternal. “Parables are transcultural, culturally unconditioned” (9). He also says it is “timeless”, “Parables are relevant always and for all time. They touch upon and evoke something primordial and fundamental in man” (9). Ribbes also talks of symbolic-parables:

'Symbolic' parables share in the nature of symbols. They are not tied to verbal discourses. They are a kind of “non-verbal” communication. Parables can be expressed wordlessly. They can be the subject of mime, acting, drawing, song or dance. (10)

Parables address themselves to all men, the literate and the illiterate, the learned and the ignorant, the trendy and the old-fashioned. But they yield their secrets more readily to those unspoilt “by culture” and “civilization”. Parables speak with an idiom far more direct, incisive and eloquent than ordinary discourse. They have a translucence that defies the opacity of words (Taylor 10). Taylor makes the meaning of the parable more clear:

It is the name given to a connected narrative, whether of events in human life or of a process in nature, by which some great spiritual truth is illustrated or enforced. It is not a mere simile, which may be expressed in a single clause; or even a detailed
comparison of one thing to another: but a little history, which might be read merely for its own sake, but which, as used by the Great Teacher, was made the vehicle of instruction or warning, of comfort or condemnation. The little girl was very near the mark, when she said that a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning", and we may not be far wrong if we define it to be a narrative true to nature or to life, used for the purpose of conveying spiritual truth to the mind of the hearer (2).

The characteristic features of a parable need special mention. A parable is usually in the form of a brief narrative, in the form of a story, bearing one single spiritual or moral truth. The truth is enmeshed inside the nutshell and the nutshell has to be broken out to relish the kernel. It is similar to the seed inside the seed coat. The subject matter is generally taken from the objects of nature, which are very familiar to readers/listeners and this makes the understanding of the parable all the more easy.

The language of a parable varies from individual to individual. It is not traditionally bound. The parabolist uses his own mother tongue to convey the deep spiritual truth. Ribbes has emphasized it: "The language of a parable is not traditionally conditioned" (10). The language in which a parable
originally took shape may change with the passage of time. But the message of the parable remains unchanged. In other words, "a parable cuts across cultural frontiers" (Ribbes 9). The subject or the substance is one but the language used for communication may vary.

In order to comprehend the term parable, it is necessary to dwell deep on the etymology of the word parable and the development of the parabolic method. The word parable originated from the Greek word *pa-ra-bo-la* (παράβολη) which means placing anything side by side. In Hebrew the word 'parable' is represented as 'mashal' (משאל). "In Biblical Hebrew, 'mashal' includes popular and proverbial sayings, discourses of sages, taunt songs and oracles" (IDB 649).

The parable has developed from the *Old Testament* and has reached its perfection in the hands of Jesus of the *New Testament*. Parabolic sayings and parables appear less frequently in the *Old Testament* for instructional purpose. The parabolic method is employed in the wisdom teaching (the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Psalms, the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Book of Sirach — generally known as Wisdom Literature). Parables and parabolic sayings are a popular and familiar method of wisdom teaching. In the *Old Testament* the parable is less used for instructional purpose when compared with the parables
of the rabbis and Jesus Christ. Wisdom teachers use gnomic sayings or wise sayings, which deal with familiar concepts of human life and conduct as in a direct way without any obscure elements or vague abstract suggestions.

"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow of his mother" is an illustration of a gnomic saying (Proverbs 6.6). Parabolic sayings are very rare in the Book of Proverbs.

Without having any chief,
officer or ruler,
she (the ant) prepares her food in summer,
And gathers her sustenance in harvest (Proverbs 6.7,8).

A 'gnomic saying' is different from a parabolic saying. A gnomic saying is merely a factual observation but a parabolic saying pronounces a judgment upon a moral or religious issue. It has been utilized for deductive purposes by adding an interpretative application, as in the following.

'How long will you be there, you sluggard'?
'When will you arise from your sleep'?
'A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding' of the hands to rest,
And poverty will come upon you like a vagabond,
And want like an armed man (Proverbs 6.7,8,9).
Gnomic saying and parabolic saying are conveniently utilized to convey moral and spiritual truths. There is a gradual development from the gnomic saying to parabolic saying and this has been further developed as narrative parable. “Even though all the parabolic sayings can be expanded into parables and some into narrative parables, wisdom writers generally prefer the briefer parabolic utterances” (IDB 650).

In Wisdom Literature, the wisdom teachers have also used narrative parables as found in the Book of Ecclesiastes (9.13-16). The parabolic narrative has three parts: introduction, illustration by a narrative and finally a gnomic saying (IDB 650). “I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me” (Proverbs 4.13) is the ‘introduction’ of a parable. Then comes the illustration:

There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, building great siege works against it. But there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man (Proverbs 9.14-15).

And finally the parable reaches its culmination with a gnomic saying “But I say that wisdom is better than might, though a poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded” (Proverbs 9.16).
The parables of the *Old Testament* rarely conceal knowledge. The truth is apparent and open to all the readers/listeners' observations and deduction. Generally parables are used for observation and deduction. The Apocryphal writers, for example Sirach, have profusely used the parabolic sayings. In Enoch, another Apocryphal book of the *Old Testament*, one finds a pseudo-epigraphic author using the word parable in a sense quite different from that of the wisdom writers, the rabbis and the symbolic evangelists. Here the parables deal with revelation without which the secrets of God would be inaccessible to mankind. The examples for this type of parables are seen in plenty in the Book of Enoch (1.5, 37.5, 38.1, 45.1, 58.1, 68.1).

Parables are also used in such a way that sometimes they conceal the meaning. This method of concealing the meaning can be called 'dark saying' or 'riddle-like saying' (*IDB 650*). This is vividly presented in the Book of Proverbs (1.6). Exodial significance is given to the word parable in Job's discourses on the problem of evil (Job 27.1, cf Psalms 49.4-20). Oracle significance is also seen in the other books of the *Old Testament* like the Book of Numbers (23.7).
2.2. The Allegory

Parables make use of allegories in which symbols are used to represent a particular truth. A parable reveals the truth. But an allegory conceals the truth. To comprehend the word 'allegory', it is necessary to analyse the origin and development of the literary form allegory. Allegory has been employed during the earlier centuries before Christ. In the *Old Testament* allegory is seen in the Book of Ezekiel (10.14, 17.1-10, 19.1-9, 20.45-49). The word 'allegory' originated from the Greek word *Hyponoia* (ὑπονοία) and it denotes allegorical exposition of mythical legends. The Greek writers wrote Homeric stories of the gods. The Jewish-Hellenistic words of thought of Alexandria defend that authority of tradition by allegorical interpretation.

Allegorical interpretations had their origin in ingenuous etymological explanations of the names given to deities and began to resolve the tensions between the myth on the one hand and science and philosophy on the other, to protect the tension against satirical attacks.

In 640 to 540 BC, Thakesphilosopte was the first to initiate a moral and metaphysical interpretation of myth. Theogyne of Rhegium in his *Apology* continued to apply the allegorical method of interpretation more thoroughly to
the ancient traditions. Cratus or Mallusse explained the entire text of Homer
and Plato (Republic) and followed again the allegorical method. The writings
of Plutarch testify to the impact made by the allegorist upon the Hellenistic
world (IDB 1, 82).

Hellenistic Judaism shows the allegorical understanding of Jewish
scriptures. Aristobulous of Alexandria in the second century BC integrated
the Jewish and Greek thoughts. Then the Jewish author Philo (Ca-450)
allegorized the Old Testament of the Bible. His philosophical allegorization
removed him from the original meaning. He translated the Greek views into
Hebrew tradition. The Greek view of cosmology, morality, epistemology,
physiology, psychology were fused together with the revealed scriptures and
this forms Hellenistic Judaism or Judaism Hellenism. Palestinian Judaism is
less complex and it adheres closely to the literal meaning. From the scrolls
retrieved from the Dead Sea a new type of interpretation is made possible and
that is the Juristic treatment which differs from the Hellenistic treatment.

A parable is a short story bearing a moral which is open to all. There is
no need for explanation. Allegory is a developed form of parable where the
truth is enmeshed like the kernel inside the nutshell. It has to be described and
explained further. A parable is a simple story and conveys the message of
moral without any concealment. Allegory is the symbolic representation of facts concealing the truth. It requires coherent patterns of symbols demanding interpretations. However, certain parables of Jesus Christ “The Ten Virgins” (Matt 25.1-13) and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s “In the Forest of the World” (TP 2) are allegorical in the sense that they conceal the meaning. It is very certain that in an allegory the meaning is not thrown to light openly to the listeners or readers but is concealed and needs some explanations or interpretations.

The parabolist Jesus Christ uses the parable of the “Ten Virgins” (Matt 25.1-13) as an allegory, symbolically representing a particular spiritual truth of preparedness. Ten virgins went to meet a bridegroom. Five of them went well prepared to meet the bridegroom with lamp and sufficient oil to keep the lamp burning till the bridegroom arrived. But the remaining five failed to keep sufficient oil with them. They begged the other five virgins for oil when the bridegroom was about to arrive. The wise virgins refused because they might also be in want if they shared the oil. When the foolish virgins went to purchase oil, the bridegroom came and took with him the five wise virgins. The five foolish virgins were despised and the door of the banquet hall was closed. The wise virgins thus found acceptance with the bridegroom. The foolish maidens who were not prepared and went late knocked at the door
calling, "Lord, Lord, open to us", but he answered and said, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not". Jesus concludes, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the son of man comes" (Matt 25.11-13).

This allegorical parable can be interpreted thus: The bridegroom represents Jesus Christ who will come to this world once again in all his glory. The bride symbolises the people of the world who are going to meet Jesus Christ. On the Day of Judgment, only those who are prepared like the wise maidens with lamp and oil will be able to enter the kingdom of God. But the foolish ones who are not ready and cannot keep their lamps burning will be rejected and they cannot enter heaven. Being ready with lamps and oil can be interpreted further at different levels.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parable “In the Forest of the World” (TP 2) can be considered as an allegory with its meaning more concealed than obvious. When a man was going through the forest he was attacked by three robbers. The robbers bound his hands and feet. After sometime the third robber came and said:

Ah, I am sorry, Are you hurt? I will release you from your bonds. After setting the man free, the chief said, “Come with me. I will take you to the public highway”. After a long time,
they reached the road. At this the man said, “Sir, you have been very good to me. Come with me to my house”. “Oh! No,” the other replied, “I can’t come there”. The police will know it (TP 2).

This world itself is the forest and the three robbers prowling here are satvas, rajas and tamas representing truth, worldliness and darkness. But satva is far away from the knowledge of Brahman.

2.3. The Similitude / Simile

There are simple and narrative parables also. The simple parables can be the similitudes or the comparisons where a truth is spoken in terms of comparisons. For example, Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed and leaven (Matt 13.13-32). Then there are the fables wherein the truth is narrated in the form of a story with animals as examples. For instance, Somerset Maugham’s “The Ant and the Grasshopper” is a fable with the moral ‘Industry is rewarded and giddiness is punished’ (Jagadisan 46). Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, besides parables, used fables as well to explain the spiritual truth (TP 37,42). In other words, parable, allegory, similitude or comparison, metaphor and fable come under the common umbrella ‘Parable’.
Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have also used comparisons or similitudes to express the divine truth. A similitude is defined as “a comparison of one thing with another, an ornament in poetry or rhetoric. A comparison is drawn between two things” (Eliade 106). Similitude is a form of comparison used as a device to express facts through the comparative method.

The parable of the “Mustard Seed” (Matt 13.31-32) and the “Pearl” (Matt 13.45-46) are fine examples of similitude used by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, in order to explain the Kingdom of God, presents in the parable, a common thing, the mustard seed which is known to the listeners / followers who have gathered around him to listen to his teachings. The mustard seed, even though the smallest of the seeds, when grows and goes up, shows itself to be the largest of all the trees and provides shelter for the birds of the air to build their nests in the branches. The kingdom of heaven is like the mustard seed. It is also like a pearl of great value. When sought by a merchant, he has to sell all that he has and buy that precious pearl.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa also uses similitudes to express the divine truth. His very notion about God that “different paths lead to the same goal” is explained by a comparison or similitude. The different doors of a
house lead to the same house. Similarly one may call God Jesus Christ, Allah or Krishna. But they are only doors to reach heaven. "The Salt Doll" (*TP* 169) and "How Chaitanya Attracted the Worldly" (*TP* 215) are also telling examples of the similitudes used by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. In the similitude "The Salt Doll", Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa expresses the truth that God is formless. To try to fathom the depth of the formless God is like the Salt Doll that wants to measure the depth of the ocean. But the moment the feet touch the water she melts and she is lost. Mysterious is God and equally mysterious are his ways.

To express the truth that struggle and sacrifice are imperative to attain the heavenly bliss, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa uses the similitude of "How Chaitanya Attracted the Worldly". "Come, repeat the name of Hari and you shall have a delicious soup of magur fish and the embrace of a young woman who would chant the name of God" (*TP* 215). After tasting a little of the nectar of God's hallowed name they would soon realize that the fish soup really meant the tears they shed for the love of God while the young woman signified the earth. The embrace of the woman meant rolling on the ground in the rapture of divine love.
2.4. The Fable

A fable is a story narrated using animals as main characters. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa uses fables to express the divine truth. A fable can be defined thus:

A form of didactic narrative in which plants or animals think, speak and behave as people do. The fable is related to the allegory and the parable; in all three types the actors and what they do resemble, but remain distinct from, the characters, who are the narrator’s real concern and their actions. The reader or the hearer knows the difference, draws the parallel, and discerns the moral. What distinguishes the fable from the other forms is the human behaviour in it of trees and beasts and inanimate nature (Bucke 221).

Thus it becomes evident that the fable also comes under the general rubric of the parable which is ‘ever old and ever new’. William H. Taylor brings out the difference between fable and parable, “the fable finds its sphere in the lower department of merely worldly prudence, while that of the parable is in the enforcement of the highest spiritual truths” (5). Fables perform the function of action displaying actions on the stage. Fable is similar to parable where the narrator uses plants and animals as examples to convey the truth.
Fable is very easy to understand and is not complicated like an allegory which is full of symbolic interpretations. The most famous fables are those written by Aesop, a deformed physician of the sixth century BC and the *Pancha Tantra Tales* of India. Some discovered an Egyptian Papiri of 1000 – 800 BC, containing ancient fables of practical wisdom, code of life and moral lessons.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is an effective fabulist in imparting the divine truth. His fable "Enmeshed in Maya Brahman Weeps" (TP 47) throws light upon the role played by *Maya* in man's life. Vishnu incarnated himself as a sow to destroy the demon Tiranyaka. After that Vishnu was contented dwelling inside the sow. And so Shiva had to come back to destroy the sow's body and release Vishnu to heaven.

Again Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's fable "Such is the Pride that Money Begets" (TP 36) presents the pride that money brings on man. A frog happened to be in possession of a coin and it hid it in a hole, over which an elephant walked and soon the frog remarked, "How dare you walk over my hole?" (TP 36). Such is the pride that money begets. Money is a hindrance to bringing man closer to God.

Although there are no fables used by Jesus Christ, in the *Old Testament* of the Bible there are two fine examples of fables. In the first fable the trees
seeking a king appeal in vain to the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine; the bramble alone is willing but promises tyranny (Judges 9.3-15). The second one is about a thistle which acted presumptuously against a cedar and a wild beast came and trampled the thistle (II Kings 14.9). In the New Testament Jesus Christ has used only parables, allegories and similitudes / metaphors in unravelling the divine truth. Fables are not used.

2.5. The Metaphor/Extended Metaphor

The parables of the New Testament (Jesus Christ) are generally classified as Narrative Parables, Simple Parables and Parabolic Sayings. The narrative parables are without introductory formula of comparison such as: "The kingdom of heaven is like [ . . . ] (Matt 25.13). The subject matter is secular and the story as a whole makes its own point. There are four exceptions – those about the "Rich Fool" (Matt 19.16-30), the "Rich Man and Lazarus" (Luke 16.9-31), "Publican and Pharisee" (Luke 18.9-14), and the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10.25-37).

In the simple parable, there is the formula of comparison. For example, 'It is like' or 'As' followed by a noun or a verb, or by a command or question. The parabolic saying is a brief utterance stating a fact of common human experience to be applied by the listener to some present situations or
circumstance, for example (Matt 5.14; 15-16, Luke 16.13). A parabolic saying (John 6.5) differs from a parable in its absence of the comparative element and from the narrative parable in its brevity. Parabolic sayings and narrative parables are extension of metaphors. Simple parables are extension of similes.

There is the use of metaphors in the teaching of Jesus calling the synagogue “den of robbers” (Matt 2.13) and the Scribes and the Pharisees “the blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matt 23.24). Further there is extended metaphor (Luke 6.38) which illustrates the transfer of metaphors to a parabolic saying, “Every plant which my heavenly father has not planted shall be rooted up” (Matt 15.13). Sometimes a metaphor is transferred to a parable (Matt 12.43-45). Simile involves comparison and contrast (Luke 22.3). There is simple simile (Luke 22.31) as well as extended simile (Matt 23.27).

2.6. The Origin and Development

An analysis of the history of the Old Testament parables and New Testament parables makes it clear that the New Testament parables are based on the parables of the Old Testament. There existed gnomic sayings and the gnomic sayings developed further into parabolic sayings and then into narrative parables and finally the parable took its present shape and form in
the hands of Jesus Christ and became full-fledged with its own salient features. A parable may make use of allegories. A more complicated development of the parable is allegory, where symbols are used to demonstrate a particular truth.

The form of the parable is prose in the parables of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. But historically parables developed from poetry to prose as a medium of instruction. It can be noted in the gnomic sayings or wise sayings. Parabolic sayings are the Proverbs of the *Old Testament*, which are poetic (Proverbs). But parables usually are in the form of prose, briefly narrated with poetic images and descriptions to convey the truth or moral. It can be confirmed that the poetic form of parabolic narratives in the *Old Testament* later developed into prose form of the parable.

The origin and development of the parable is discernible not only in the *Old Testament*, but also in the Hindu *Puranas*. Sri Ramakrishna Parahamsa’s parables are situational recreations of the stories in the Hindu *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*. Parables are, thus, in a way said to be as old as mankind itself. Jesus Christ’s parables are two thousand years old while Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s parables are a hundred and fifty years old. But the parables have acquired new dimensions in the way Sri
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has broadened and proliferated their operating space when compared with those of Jesus Christ's which are more rigorous, artistic and poetic.

A parable, however, should not be misconstrued as a short story. A short story is different from a parable. A short story covers a few pages. Of course there are very long parables in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s narrations. Yet a parable is very short, exceeding not more than two paragraphs. Therefore, a parable cannot be said to be a short story but may be considered as a ‘mini short story’.

In a parable a great truth is bestowed on mankind at once in an artistically entertaining and spiritually ennobling way. Not only a parable gives recreation but it also imparts knowledge which is easily imprinted in the heart of the reader/listener when it is narrated in the form of a story. A reader/listener is able to keep it in memory for many years. That is why Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa handled this method basically for the purpose of instruction. Peter Ribbes is, therefore, right when he stated that “It is not a time killer or gap-filler but it makes the readers/listeners act, react and interact” (11).
To sum up, the parabolists, Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, in order to make the reader/listener understand the spiritual truth more vividly, resort to the method of using parables. These parabolists have won universal reputation for the effective, meaningful and impressive way of handling the medium of the parable. They have fully utilised the parabolic method in order to convey the spiritual truth and impart the divine knowledge about God, kingdom of God and the path to be tried by man to reach the Ultimate and the Absolute. Lofty ideas and sublime ideals are expressed by these parabolists in an exalted manner through their parables and they have won universal acclaim for their artistic handling of the parables, just like a painter or an artist who paints the picture or landscape without the 'Sloth of the eye'.

In short, a parable may rightly be described as an artistic means of instruction and exhortation. It is an easy and effective method of revealing a great truth. What is indeed remarkable is that Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have so very subtly handled the parabolic medium in all its diverse dimensions. That they have earned for themselves immortal glory as exemplary parabolists of world literature is beyond doubt.