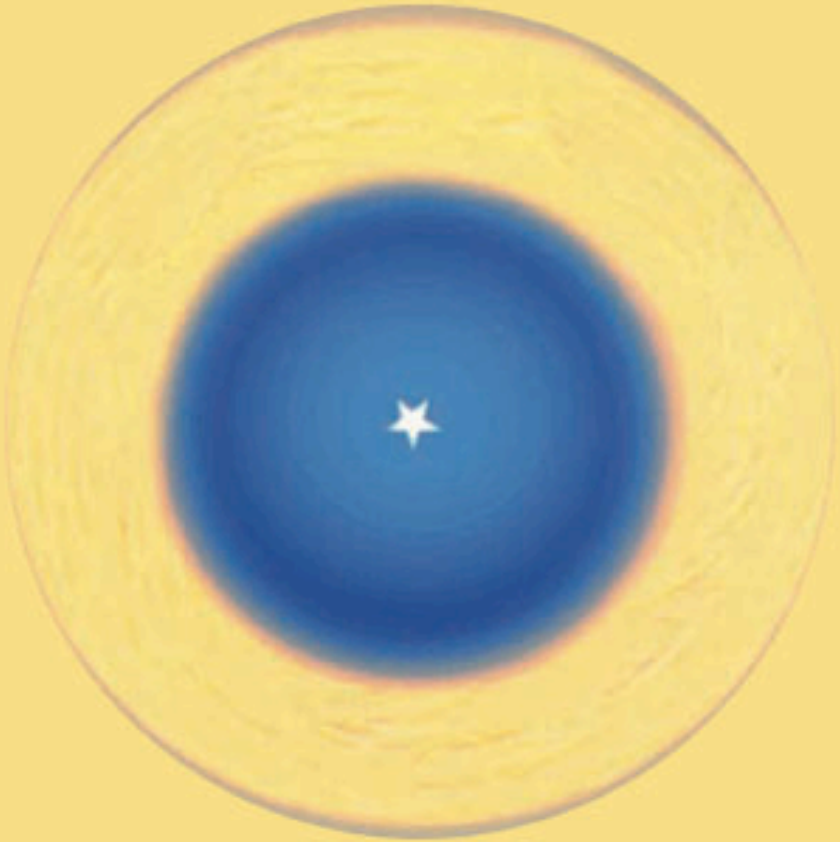


WHAT IS GOD?



An Article and a Poem
by Paramhansa Yogananda

WHAT IS GOD?

The usual conception of God is that He is superhuman, infinite, omnipresent, and omniscient; but in this general conception there are many variations. Whatever conception we have of God, if it does not influence our daily conduct, if our everyday life does not find an inspiration from it, and if it is not found to be universally necessary, then that conception is useless. If God is not conceived in such a way that we cannot do without Him in the satisfaction of a want, in our dealings with people when earning money, in reading a book, in passing an examination, in the doing of the most trifling or the highest duties, then it is plain that we have not felt any connection between God and life. God may be infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, personal, and merciful, but these conceptions are not sufficiently compelling to make us try to *know* God. We have no immediate and practical use for those conceptions in our busy, rushing lives.

We read about God in the various Scriptures. We hear of His presence and praise in the sermons of religious men and saints. We imagine Him behind the veils of the beauty of Nature. We think about His existence through the logic within us, but all of these windows through which we try to see God are fitted with an opaque glass of uncertain inference drawn from untested, unscrutinized data.

We cannot have full or direct knowledge of God through the limited powers of the intellect, which give only a partial and indirect view of things. To view a thing intellectually is not to see it by being one with it. It is to view it by being apart from it. Intuition is the direct grasp of Truth. It is in this intuition that Bliss Consciousness, or God Consciousness, is realized. God is Bliss. He is ever-existent. When we wish for Eternal Bliss, or God, we also wish for Eternal, Immortal, Unchangeable,-Ever-Conscious Existence.

It must be remembered that finding God does not imply complete neglect of the various physical and spiritual battles of life. On the other hand, the climbing spiritual aspirant must learn to conquer in order to free the temple of life from the darkness of ignorance and the weakness of disease, so that God's perfect presence may be perceived. As a house full of jewels cannot be seen in the dark, so that presence of God cannot be felt while the darkness of ignorance, overpowering disease, or mental inharmony prevails.

WHAT IS GOD?

Some dream of You as Spirit,
Some speak of You as Ever-Conscious Omniscience,
Some tell You are the Substance Ocean
With waves of creation playing o'er You.
Some speak of You as the Telos
Trade-marked in everything.
But as I beheld You within
With the eyes of silence
I felt You as all-pervading stir,
The intelligent COSMIC VIBRATION,
The breath of all creation.
And I heard Your Voice
As the COSMIC SOUND
Humming through my body
Into the Universe.
Through all-directions-penetrating eyes
I saw You as the COSMIC LIGHT.
With my heart of stillness
I intuited You as EVER-NEW BLISS,
Running through the veins of my Space Body
And thrilling my expanded Self.
I followed upstream the river of my love
And found its Source in You
As the COSMIC LOVE,
Love which unites two equal hearts.
Soulfully I pursued You
In the temple of devotion
And I found You as COSMIC DEVOTION,
The devotion which binds you
As the Father to all His children.
As I intimately conversed within
With my Divine Reason
I heard You as COSMIC WISDOM.
O, Cosmic Vibration, Cosmic Sound,
Cosmic Light, Cosmic Ever-new Bliss,
Cosmic Love, Cosmic Devotion,
Cosmic Wisdom -- I found You to be all these
In the temple of ecstasy.