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#### *A note to the reader:*

To assist the reader who may be unfamiliar with the concepts and terminology of Yoga and Eastern philosophy, a glossary has been provided at the back of the book.

This gives easy-to-find definitions of most of the terms that are important to understanding Paramahansa Yogananda's exposition of the teachings of Jesus—such as Christ Consciousness, Holy Ghost, *Aum*, the astral and causal worlds, and the various yogic terms applicable to the experience of meditation and God-realization.

## CHAPTER 1

# Jesus the Avatar

### God's Manifestation in Divine Incarnations

For mere mortals to cope with a life of unsolved and unsolvable mysteries in an inscrutable universe would indeed be an overwhelming challenge were it not for divine emissaries who come on earth to speak with the voice and authority of God for the guidance of man.

Aeons past, in ancient higher ages in India, *rishis* enunciated the manifestation of Divine Beneficence, of “God with us,” in terms of divine incarnations, avatars—God incarnate on earth in enlightened beings....

Many are the voices that have intermediated between God and man, *khanda avatars*, or partial incarnations in God-knowing souls. Less common are the *purna avatars*, liberated beings who are fully one with God; their return to earth is to fulfill a God-ordained mission.

The Lord in the sacred Hindu Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, declares:

*“Whenever virtue declines and vice predominates, I incarnate as an Avatar. In visible form I appear from age to age to protect the virtuous and to destroy evildoing in order to reestablish righteousness.”*

The same one glorious infinite consciousness of God, the Universal Christ Consciousness, *Kutastha Chaitanya*, becomes familiarly apparelled in the individuality of an enlightened soul, graced with a distinguishing personality and godly nature appropriate to the times and purpose of the incarnation.

Without this intercession of God's love come to earth in the example, message, and guiding hand of His avatars, it would scarce be possible for groping humanity to find the path into God's kingdom midst the dark miasma of world delusion, the cosmic substance of human habitation.

Lest His benighted children be lost forever in creation's delusive labyrinths, the Lord comes again and again in God-illuminated prophets to light the way....

Jesus was preceded by Gautama Buddha, the "Enlightened One," whose incarnation reminded a forgetful generation of the Dharma Chakra, the ever-rotating wheel of karma—self-initiated action and its effects which make each man, and not a Cosmic Dictator, responsible for his own present condition. Buddha brought heart back into the arid theology and mechanical rituals into which the ancient Vedic religion of India had fallen after the passing of a higher age in which Bhagavan Krishna, India's most beloved of avatars, preached the way of divine love and God-realization through the practice of the supreme spiritual science of yoga, union with God.



Divine intercession to mitigate the cosmic law of cause and effect [karma], by which a man suffers from his errors, was at the heart of the mission of love Jesus came to fulfill....

Jesus came to demonstrate the forgiveness and compassion of God, whose love is a shelter even from exacting law.



The Good Shepherd of souls opened his arms to all, rejecting none, and with universal love coaxed the world to follow him on the path to liberation through the example of his spirit of sacrifice, renunciation, forgiveness, love for friend and enemy alike, and supreme love for God above all else.

As the tiny babe in the manger at Bethlehem, and as the savior who healed the sick and raised the dead and applied the salve of love on the wounds of errors, the Christ in Jesus lived among men as one of them that they too might learn to live like gods.

## Christ Consciousness: Oneness With God's Infinite Intelligence and Bliss Pervading All Creation

To understand the magnitude of a divine incarnation, it is necessary to understand the source and nature of the consciousness that is incarnate in the avatar.

Jesus spoke of this consciousness when he proclaimed: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30) and "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 14:11). Those who unite their consciousness to God know both the transcendent and the immanent nature of Spirit—the singularity of the ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss of the Uncreate Absolute, and the myriad manifestations of His Being as the infinitude of forms into which He variegates Himself in the panorama of creation.



There is a distinguishing difference of meaning between *Jesus* and *Christ*. His given name was Jesus; his honorific title was "Christ." In his little human body called Jesus was born the vast Christ Consciousness, the omniscient Intelligence of God omnipresent in every part and particle of creation.



The universe is not the result merely of a fortuitous combination of vibrating forces and subatomic particles, as proposed by material scientists—a chance excrescence of solids, liquids, and gases into earth, oceans, atmosphere, plants, all harmoniously interrelated to provide a habitable home for human beings. Blind forces cannot organize themselves into intelligently structured objects. As human intelligence is needed to put water into the small square compartments of an ice tray to be frozen into cubes, so in the coalescence of vibration into progressively evolving forms throughout the universe we see the results of a hidden Immanent Intelligence.



What could be more miraculous than the evident presence in every speck of creation of a Divine Intelligence? How the mighty tree

emerges from a tiny seed. How countless worlds roll in infinite space, held in a purposeful cosmic dance by the precise adjustment of universal forces. How the marvelously complex human body is created from a single microscopic cell, is endowed with self-conscious intelligence, and

### *Science Discovers Intelligent Order*

“The rise of science served to extend the range of nature’s marvels, so that today we have discovered order in the deepest recesses of the atom and among the grandest collection of galaxies,” writes Paul Davies, Ph.D., well-known author and professor of mathematical physics, in *Evidence of Purpose: Scientists Discover the Creator* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1994).

Systems theorist Ervin Laszlo reports in *The Whispering Pond: A Personal Guide to the Emerging Vision of Science* (Boston: Element Books, 1999): “The fine-tuning of the physical universe to the parameters of life constitutes a series of coincidences—if that is what they are...in which even the slightest departure from the given values would spell the end of life, or, more exactly, create conditions under which life could never have evolved in the first place. If the neutron did not outweigh the proton in the nucleus of the atom, the active lifetime of the Sun and other stars would be reduced to a few hundred years; if the electric charge of electrons and protons did not balance precisely, all configurations of matter would be unstable and the universe would consist of nothing more than radiation and a relatively uniform mixture of gases...If the strong force that binds the particles of a nucleus were merely a fraction *weaker* than it is, deuteron could not exist and stars such as the Sun could not shine. And if that force were slightly *stronger* than it is, the Sun and other active stars would inflate and perhaps explode...The values of the four universal forces [electromagnetism, gravity, and the nuclear strong and weak forces] were precisely such that life could evolve in the cosmos.”

Professor Davies estimates that if—as some scientists maintain—there were no inherent guiding intelligence and cosmic evolution were governed only by the chance operation of strictly mechanical laws, “the time required to achieve the level of order we now meet in the universe purely by random processes is of the order of at least  $10^{10^{80}}$  years”—inconceivably longer than the current age of the universe. Citing these calculations, Laszlo wryly observes: “Serendipity of this magnitude strains credibility,” and concludes: “Must we then face the possibility that the universe we witness is the result of purposeful design by an omnipotent master builder?” (*Publisher’s Note*)

is sustained, healed, and enlivened by invisible power. In every atom of this astounding universe, God is ceaselessly working miracles; yet obtuse man takes them for granted.



Christ is God's Infinite Intelligence that is present in all creation. The Infinite Christ is the "only begotten son" of God the Father, the only pure Reflection of Spirit in the created realm. That Universal Intelligence, the *Kutastha Chaitanya* or Krishna Consciousness of the Hindu scriptures, was fully manifested in the incarnation of Jesus, Krishna, and other divine ones; and it can be manifested also in your consciousness.



Just imagine! If you were living in this one room all of your life, having no contact with or knowledge of what is beyond these walls, you would say that this is the whole of your world. But if someone were to take you into the world outside, you would realize how infinitesimal your "world" was. So it is with the perception of Christ Consciousness. The scope of mortal consciousness by comparison is like observing only the area of a tiny mustard seed to the exclusion of the rest of the cosmos. Christ Consciousness is Omnipresence, the Lord spread over every pore of infinite space and permeating every atom.\*



An ant's consciousness is limited to the sensations of its little body. An elephant's consciousness is extended throughout its massive frame, so that ten people touching ten different parts of its body would awaken simultaneous awareness. Christ Consciousness...extends to the boundaries of all vibratory regions.

The entirety of vibratory creation is an externalization of Spirit. Omnipresent Spirit secretes Itself in vibratory matter, just as oil is hidden in the olive. When the olive is squeezed, tiny drops of oil appear on its

\* See also pages 24 ff. The counter-force in creation, which produces disharmony, disease, separateness, and ignorance, is personified in the Bible as Satan. In yoga philosophy this delusive force is called *Maya* or *Apara-Prakriti*. A comprehensive explanation is given by Paramahansa Yogananda in *The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You*.