

WHO IS GOD?

DOES GOD HAVE SHAPE OR FORM?

SUDHIR ANAND

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Who Is GOD?

Does God Have Shape or Form?

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD BASED ON THE VEDAS

AND

A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST WITH THOSE IN
THE ABRAHAMIC FAITHS AND LATER HINDU SCRIPTURES

Sudhir Anand

ASK PUBLICATIONS, LOS ANGELES

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EKAM SAT VIPRA BAHUDHA VADANTI

(RIG VEDA 1: 164: 46)

GOD IS ONE, SAGES CALL GOD BY MANY NAMES

(SEE PAGE # 91 FOR DETAILS)

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PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

Is there only One God in the universe who has been rightly or wrongly described in different ways by Hindus, Jews, Christians and Muslims? Or, are there many versions of 'One God' because God keeps changing and evolving to suit the needs of founders and followers of various religions? What are God's real attributes? Is Omnipresent God, a formless entity, a Universal Spirit with no shape or form, or is God an anthropomorphic being or entity (i.e. has human form) who sits on a throne in the heaven? Does God incarnate as a human being as believed by Hindus and Christians or does He not? Is God a loving God or a tyrant? If He is a loving God, why do beliefs in a loving God often divide us, rather than unite us as mankind? Why do differing beliefs in God sometimes even generate hatred rather than foster understanding? Whose beliefs and which beliefs are right? Whose beliefs and which beliefs are wrong? We all have a free will and may believe whatever we choose but are our beliefs and faith in God based upon truth, common sense and reason or upon unsubstantiated dogmas as well as unbelievable miracles and myths? This book tries to address questions such as these based on the description of God in the Vedas.

The questions regarding God and His attributes are important for all of us to answer with an open and thoughtful mind, so that we all can co-exist peacefully in the 21st century instead of fighting with each other based on the claims of superiority of one religion over others. Therefore, we should all do our best to seek truth wherever we may find it while critically analyzing the divergent opinions of various fundamentalists of all religions who claim that they have all the answers about God. Moreover, our faith

and concepts of God must reconcile with reason and modern science to the extent possible, while realizing that God may never be provable by the usual method of physical observation used by science.

In recent years, especially in the post 9/11/2001 world, many fundamentalist Muslims have claimed Islam to be the ‘only way’ and they want to convert the whole world to Islam. On the other hand many Christians, especially evangelical Christians consider Christianity to be the ‘only way’ and would like to convert the entire world to Christianity. After 9/11, Reverend Franklin Graham (son of Reverend Billy Graham) during an interview on ‘NBC Nightly News’ called Islam “an evil and wicked religion.” In the United States, he and others in this manner have stated that the God of Christians is different than the God of Muslims. Pope John Paul II in year 2000 proclaimed that Catholicism is superior to all other religions in facilitating the path to God. Such claims of religious superiority, along with the need to convert others to the same or similar beliefs as one’s own religion does not promote brotherly love among people of the world, instead it sows the seeds of enmity for others. In the context of such claims it is relevant to learn, what the root scriptures of Hindu religion, the Vedas say about God and His attributes.

Ekam sat viprä bahudhä vadanti (Rig Veda 1:164: 46 and
Atharvaveda 9:10: 28)

<i>Ekam</i>	<i>sat</i>	<i>viprä</i>	<i>vadanti</i>	<i>bahudhä</i>
One, God	exists eternally,	sages	call God	by many names

This is a segment of a mantra (in Sanskrit) from the Vedas which states that God is One, He exists eternally, sages or wise persons call the same One God by many names (see page # 91 for the complete mantra). We as humans may give God different names and ascribe different attributes to Him but nevertheless He remains the same One God.

This book introduces the reader to many Veda mantras and their translations to substantiate that according to the Vedas there is One God who is addressed as Om and also by many other names based upon different attributes. Moreover, according to the Vedas God is formless and has no shape or form. God does not exist as an anthropomorphic being or entity who sits on a throne in heaven. Instead, God is Omnipresent as the Universal Spirit and does not incarnate as a human being or directly father children. God can be never adequately represented by any human being or an image such as an icon/idol, statue or a picture. God is Omniscient and the Root Source of all true knowledge. All individuals have the potential to directly (without intermediaries) acquire bliss and true knowledge from God through the practice of spiritual yoga—meditation. Similarly, God is Omnipotent. God's omnipotence, however, does not mean that He can do whatever He pleases. Even God follows rules of the material science He has created. God does not and can not perform miracles that defy rules of the material science such as turning a wooden staff into a live serpent or vice versa. Also, God is Just, Kind and Perfect. God is a Perfect Judge who judges us based upon our karmas (deeds) and not because He favors certain people and is prejudiced against others. Similarly, God's kindness does not mean that He forgives sins or heinous acts of persons simply because they acknowledge His incarnations as Rama, Krishna or Christ as their savior or accept Muhammad as His last prophet. His kindness instead implies that He is always giving us new opportunities to move closer to Him and find bliss. He gives new opportunities even to sinners, to change themselves and follow the right path. As the inner voice to our soul, God is constantly providing us with enlightenment and inspiration leading us to the correct path and to help us do the right thing. Also, God creates an aversion in us when we want to do something bad. It is our choice whether we want to listen to God's voice or not. Finally,

God is Supreme Bliss and it is only by knowing God that one can acquire bliss in one's life. The beliefs described above from the Vedas are in many ways markedly different than those described in Abrahamic (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) faiths as well as in the later Hindu scriptures e.g. *Purānas*—the basis of many current Hindu beliefs and practices. What you will read in this book about God is based upon the Vedas and the information is very different than what is portrayed about Hindu beliefs in the popular lay press or in the academic writings based on the Vedanta teachings of Adi Shankra or Swami Vivekananda.

In this book, attributes of God such as Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Kind and Just, along with issues like, “Does God incarnate as a human being? Has God sent the last prophet ever to be? Does God select ‘chosen people’ (i.e. is God prejudiced)?” are discussed in considerable detail as there are differences among various religions as to the exact meaning of these words. (See page #65–81 for details.)

The aim of this book is to promote an understanding of One God and His attributes based on common sense, reason and truth. It discourages blind faith in the dogmas, miracles and rituals of any religion. The book also helps us learn that while various religions have many fundamental differences, they also share many common universal truths. It is the hope of the author that our belief in One God would serve to unite mankind instead of dividing it because of our differences. To the extent, we all pray to and worship the same One Just and Kind God who is Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient and make an effort to get close to God by following His path of truth, love, generosity and respect for fellow beings our efforts will be rewarded by personal spiritual growth, happiness and finally lead to the attainment of bliss.

THE VEDAS AND THEIR MESSAGE

All Hindus, irrespective of the manner in which they practice the religion, acknowledge that the Vedas are the root source of their beliefs. The Vedas are a collection of about 20,000 mantras (verses) in Sanskrit. The Vedas are organized into four major branches: *Rig* (knowledge and science); *Yajur* (action); *Sām* (devotion); and *Atharva* (science). It is believed that the Vedas were recorded many thousand years ago in ancient India by *rishis* (holy sages, seers, yogis) following revelations in *samādhi*, the highest state of yoga: a superconscious state of meditation where God is eventually revealed and the soul is one to One with God. Samadhi is not a trance-like state as described in some English language dictionaries in the West. Hindus believe that the knowledge of the Vedas (having been revealed by God) is eternal and sacred, and their authority is considered final in comparison to other Hindu scriptures that are of a later origin such as the *Purānas*. All prayers in the Vedas are to One God only (who has been addressed by many names), and not to any other deity. Vedas have no history of any group of people. Vedic (the word Vedic refers to the Vedas) teachings are universal in application and not time referenced to be confined to a group of people at a certain point in history. Upanishads are commentaries that describe select messages of the Vedas in simpler Sanskrit. In contrast to what is stated above, many Western scholars or English language encyclopedias have erroneously described the Vedas as hymns of sacrifice and magic formulas to please various deities and have often relegated them to be of limited importance in comparison to the Upanishads which they consider to be the Crown Jewel of Brahmanic thought. This is a serious mistake because it is

the Vedas which cover in greater depth the universal messages regarding spiritual and secular knowledge. The Vedas contain information related to attributes of God, the soul, how to attain God realization, how to live a virtuous life, human relationships, community well being, and the society at large in greater detail. They also provide knowledge about physical nature and the universe. The Upanishads elaborate on select messages of the Vedas especially those related to the attributes of God, the soul, and how to attain God. These Upanishad elaborations in contrast to the Vedas mention personal names as well as relate various moral stories. This book primarily relies on the Vedas as its basis and includes references from other Vedic scriptures only if they are in accord with the Vedas.

The Sanskrit used in the Vedas is quite rich, wherein a word often has more than one meaning. In addition, the Vedas contain extensive use of symbolism, metaphors or allegory to clarify their true meaning so everyone from the learned to the unschooled can understand the message. However, if only a literal translation of the words of the Vedas is made rather than the most appropriate meaning in the context of the verses, then the meaning can become very different from the original intent. Mistranslations of the Vedas and their message by Western scholars e.g. Max Mueller, Griffith, Wilson and others, as well as by many Hindu scholars has resulted in a great disservice to the understanding of the Vedas and what they state about One God (also see pages # 91–94 for discussion of this issue). The mistranslations reflect a lack of knowledge and understanding of Vedic Sanskrit because the authors relied on traditional Sanskrit and its grammatical rules.

Many current rituals and practices of the Hindu religion are based on later Hindu scriptures such as the *Purānas* and not on the Vedic beliefs. *Purānas* record the common folklore, and legends of India based on the lives of various alleged

incarnations of God, as well as ancient Hindu kings and saints not unlike the various stories of the Bible. They are relatively recent in origin compared to Vedic texts which are ancient. Purānas contain some spiritual truths and prayers similar to those previously recorded in the Vedas and the Upanishads, but they also contain many distortions of the original messages of the Vedas. This happened because many of the metaphors used in the Vedas and Upanishads were translated literally and described as facts. (See *Rigvedādibhāshyabhoomikā* by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and *Bhoomika Bhaskar* by Swami Vidyanand Saraswati in the bibliography section.) A great many *devas*—gods and *devis*—goddesses were invented and introduced as objects of worship. *Moorti*—icon/idol worship often replaced direct prayer to God, this is opposite to the teachings of the Vedas (see pages # 54–58 for details). Although, many Hindus might disagree, it is possible to state that the *Purānas* and their message have represented a significant obstacle to the understanding of God as described in the Vedas.

The Rig Veda is the oldest literary text of any kind to be found in any of the Indo-European languages. Vedic Dharma (based strictly on the Vedas) is the oldest, continuous monotheistic religion where the same prayer mantras are sung to the same One God as they have been for thousands of years. The spectrum of religious practices and rituals among average Hindus, not unlike Christianity, varies quite a bit and there are many differences among Hindus regarding some basic beliefs such as, whether or not God incarnates in human form, or how one should pray to God. The one essential element, however, is the belief in One Supreme God. Although, all Hindus acknowledge One Supreme God—Om or Brahman, yet the majority of Hindus pray and worship before deities of God, as well as *moortis*—icons/idols of various *devas* (gods) and *devis* (goddesses) considering them symbolic representations of the many facets of the One Almighty

God, His incarnations or the ways to reach Him. Throughout this book, beliefs of those in the Hindu community who strictly follow the Vedas, pray directly to God, do not believe in God's incarnations, do not worship before a moorti or an icon, are described by the phrase 'Vedic Dharma'. For beliefs of others in the Hindu community who believe in God's incarnations and the worship of the *moortis*, the phrase 'Hindu Religion' is used. Also, in this book the word *moorti* (also spelled by others as *murti*) is used for icons or idols because Hindus prefer the word *moorti* for which they have same reverence as Christians do for a statue, picture or icon of Christ, Mary, various Christian saints and the Cross.

As stated earlier, if one were to get away from the rituals and dogmas of one's own religion, one would find that there are many basic truths and human values common to all religions, and one should be willing to incorporate into one's life positive aspects of other faiths. A religious belief or practice, however, is not worth much unless it teaches one to become a better human being first—a person who is thoughtful and recognizes that we all have similar souls (Yajur Veda 40: 5–6). A person who learns to treat other human beings with respect recognizing that their joys and sorrows as well as aspirations in life are similar to one's own. This has been described in the Vedas as *manur bhava*—behaving like a human being is a prerequisite for spiritual progress (Rig Veda 10: 53: 6). (Also, see page # 109.) To be truly religious one must learn to adopt the 'Golden Rule' in one's life "Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you." One Veda mantra (Yajur Veda 40: 5) describes the same thing as: *Yastu sarväni bhutäni ätmanyev anupashyati, sarvabhutayshu cha ätmanam tato na vichikitsati*—whoever sees a similar soul in all living beings, and in all living beings sees the Supreme Soul (i.e, God), that person does not have any loathing for others and develops love and compassion for all human beings. In a Sanskrit *shloka*—verse, the

same thing has been stated as *ätmanah pratikooläni parayshäm na samächarayte* i.e. “Listen! The essence of virtuous living is: Do not do to others what you would not like done to you.” The essence of religion is not in believing dogmas but rather in incorporating what is truth and universally good into the fabric of one’s life. One who has not learnt to love, care and respect a fellow being, how is such a person going to love and be devoted to God? His/her prayer rituals then are a rote public show that do not uplift the soul or take the person closer to God.

Although, opinions differ among Hindus as how to correctly interpret the Vedas and related scriptures, the author has followed the perspective espoused by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and believes this to be the correct one (also see page # 92–94). As stated earlier, this perspective is different than what is written about the Vedas in Western academic circles based on Max Mueller’s, Griffith’s or Sayana’s translations of the Vedas as well as the Vedanta teachings of Adi Shankra or Swami Vivekananda. According to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, “A person’s soul is capable of distinguishing between truth and untruth, yet, due to selfishness, prejudice, stubbornness or ignorance, one often abandons truth and leans towards untruth.” However, we must all strive to follow truth because it ultimately always prevails and truth is the path of virtuous and honorable persons.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the reader to some of the basic principles of the Vedic Dharma such as what is eternal as well as concepts such as the attributes of the soul, and terms *karma*, *dharma*, *moksha*, *prakriti* etc. to help better understand the description of various attributes and names of God that are discussed in detail in later chapters. Chapters # 2 and 3 are devoted to the description of God, His attributes and names based upon the Vedas. Chapters # 4 and 5 compare and contrast the description of God in the Vedas with that in the Abrahamic faiths as well as to the later Hindu scriptures e.g. Purānas.

The 2nd chapter translates many mantras from the Vedas to substantiate that according to the Vedas there is only One God and that God is formless and not an anthropomorphic entity. Moreover, God is Omnipresent as the Universal Spirit and does not incarnate as a human being. The 3rd chapter describes the meaning of word Om—the principal name of God in the Vedic Scriptures. This is followed by a listing of more than 100 names of God, their meanings and the attribute that each name represents. A discussion of how some of these names of God in the Vedas got corrupted or mistranslated into the names of various deities or gods in the Hindu religion is also included wherever feasible to clarify for the reader how a monotheistic religion at core may appear polytheistic. Although most readers are unlikely to be familiar with the Vedas, whole Veda mantras or segments of mantras which are all in Sanskrit along with their English translations are included in the text in an effort to validate the statements being made.

The 4th chapter addresses the issue of the personification of God and is God anthropomorphic. The chapter compares the

perception of God in various religions to that according to the Vedas. The 5th chapter compares various religious views about God and how religions fall short in their claims of superiority. This chapter includes a discussion of whether God incarnated as Krishna or Jesus, and whether Muhammad was the last prophet ever to be. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the issues of blind faith versus faith based on truth and reason.

There is some degree of repetition in the book to facilitate the understanding of similar messages that have been stated in different contexts. The appendix includes a few devotional songs (*Bhajans*) based on the Vedic teachings, the bibliography and the index. The index has two additional subsections devoted to the attributes and names of God both in English and transliterated Sanskrit.

I have written the book in plain English so that it would be useful to a lay person who has a limited knowledge of the Vedas or the Hindu religion, or how God is perceived in the Vedas or the Hindu religion. If the book helps one better understand God and become a better person and find meaning in life, then it would have fulfilled its purpose.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

What qualifies me as an author on God as perceived in the Vedas? Professionally, I am a physician and a teacher. I came to the United States 42 years ago (in 1966) for further training and specialization. After completing my training in 1971, I decided to immigrate and settle in the United States. Since then I have taught at Indiana University, University of Southern California, Drew University and UCLA. Currently, I am a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at David Geffen School of Medicine, at University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Vice-Chair of Pediatrics and Division Head of Pediatric Nephrology (kidney disease) both at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center, in Torrance, California. As a physician teacher, I have tried to help medical students and resident doctors in training, learn pediatrics and pediatric nephrology. My focus in teaching medicine has been to make difficult concepts easier to understand while keeping the bigger whole picture of children's welfare in perspective. While writing this book, I have tried to keep a similar perspective about God and how He is perceived in the Vedic Dharma.

My interest in the Vedic Dharma began when I was a young child. My mother, the late Shrimati Sushila Anand completed the equivalent of Master level Sanskrit education in the early 1930's. In those days, while many women in India were denied to hear Veda Mantras, she memorized most of the Yajur Veda and recited Veda mantras daily. Thanks to her, by my adolescent years I had memorized a little over 100 Veda mantras along with their meanings and in addition knew many other mantras. During my medical college years I spent part of my summer vacations at a *Gurukul* (a Vedic Dharma monastery). I also had the good

fortune of learning from several eminent Vedic scholars about the core beliefs of the Vedic Dharma as well as an introduction to the understanding of the Veda mantras. The greatest impact in my learning Veda mantras came from late Pandit Harisharan Sidhantalankar Ji who during his guest lectureships at our local Arya Samaj temple in New Delhi, India every month would do a word for word correct translation of Veda mantras into simple Hindi and explain their deeper meaning. He would also occasionally visit our home. Pandit Harisharan Ji was one of the uniquely gifted Sanskrit scholars who translated word for word all four Vedas into Hindi. Late Acharya Abhay Dev Ji's book *Vedic Vinay* which word for word translates 366 Veda mantras (one for every day of the year) into Hindi along with a discussion of the message also has been very important in my learning. Between 1966 and 1991, being busy at work, raising family as well as due to fascination with modern science I had lost considerable interest in further learning the Vedic scriptures. During the past 17 years my interest in Vedas and related scriptures has rekindled and I have read several Vedic scriptures (also scriptures of other religions) and have tried to better understand the messages of the Veda mantras with a more mature perspective. During these years, late Swami Satyam Ji (until his passing away in 2006), furthered my learning of more Veda mantras, Ishopanishad, Mandookyopanishad, Kathopanishad and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. I am not a Sanskrit scholar, nor do I claim any special recognition as a Vedic religious teacher or a preacher. At best, I am a better informed lay person in the Vedic Dharma. I have tried to describe God in simple words from what I have learnt from my parents, teachers, and the reading of various Vedic scriptures. As stated before I have used plain English and tried to make the essential beliefs about God in the Vedic Dharma understandable to the reader so that he/she does not get lost in trivia.

I strongly believe that truth is far more important than

religious dogma irrespective of the organized religion. Our religious beliefs should be based on what our intellect and common sense would guide is true or likely to be true, rather than based on blind faith in dogmas. Religious truths must reconcile with scientific truths to the extent possible. One should always be willing to accept what is true and discard that which is not, even if it means discarding cherished beliefs or what is written in scriptures. What is not true can not for ever masquerade as truth. It is my sincere hope that persons who are unbiased and those of goodwill will find this book useful in understanding God, especially as it is perceived in the Vedic Dharma. All omissions and mistakes in this book are mine and do not in any manner reflect upon the knowledge of my teachers. Please feel free to inform me of any mistakes or confusing statements you identify, and I will do my best to correct them in future editions.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The book is dedicated to honor Maharshi Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who about 140 years ago, re-introduced in India, the true message of the Vedas and other Vedic scriptures by translating them into simple language. He refocussed them to the understanding of One God as described in the Vedas and Upanishads. He also personally spent his life spreading that message. He promoted women's education and encouraged them to learn the Vedas and other Vedic scriptures. He believed in a *varana*—social divisions of society (caste system) based on a person's character and occupation (not hereditary by birth) and encouraged others to do the same. I first acquired basic understanding of God, and His (Her) many attributes and many names from my mother Shrimati Sushila Anand and father Shri Jia Ram Anand. My teachers, Pandit Harisharan Sidhantalankar, Swami Omanand Saraswati, Swami Satyam, Dharmpal Shastri and others further inspired me to learn and gain better understanding of God. Although, I personally have not known the following Vedic scholars: Swami Vidyanand Saraswati, Pandit Ganga Prasad Upadhyaya, Acharya Abhay Dev, Brahamrishi Shripad Damodar Satvalekar, Swami Vedanand Teerth, Pandit Dharmdev Vidyamartand and Dr. Tulsi Ram, their published works (see bibliography) on God and Vedas have been of prime importance in completing this book. This book is dedicated to all of them, for they not only gave me the knowledge, but also with their own examples have shown me what true faith in and devotion to God means. I want to give my deep thanks to my brother Subodh Anand and sister-in-law Manju Anand for their

generous help in critiquing and re critiquing the book and giving useful suggestions. Additionally, I want to extend my sincere thanks to my friend Bhushan Verma for his critique and helpful suggestions. I also greatly appreciate the professional advice and help from Christine Nolt, Cirrus Book Design, Santa Barbara, CA with the book cover design and the page layout.

All profits from the sale of the book will be donated to various Vedic institutions to further spread the true understanding of God and His message as described in the Vedas.

The focus of this book as stated above is the description of God. The reader is referred to a companion book, *The Essence of the Hindu Religion: with an introduction to Vedas and Yoga*, previously written by me (Sudhir Anand) which describes the other core beliefs of Vedic Dharma along with a translation of the 40TH Chapter of Yajur Veda (Ishopanishad), and Patanjali's spiritual yoga. The book also discusses issues such as prayer and worship of God, the attributes of the soul, the physical universe (prakriti) and provides correct definition of many commonly used words e.g. karma, dharma, guru, and mantra. Small segments of the present book have been reproduced from my previous publication *The Essence of the Hindu Religion: with an introduction to Vedas and Yoga* with the permission of the author and the publisher. The book was originally published by ASK Publications, Los Angeles in year 2000 and reprinted in 2001 and 2005. A revised edition of the book with a new title *The Essence of the Vedic Dharma (Hindu Religion Based on the Vedas): with an introduction to Vedas and Yoga*, will be published by ASK Publications in the next couple of years.

SPELLINGS OF SANSKRIT WORDS DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK

The spellings of many Sanskrit words, when transliterated in English, in the traditional manner are phonetically incorrect. Hence, unless one is familiar with the style, many words when pronounced sound very different than the original Sanskrit pronuciation. To rectify this issue various types of accents (that are unfamiliar to most persons) have often been used, but this itself is more confusing than helpful. For example, the Sanskrit word *Prajapate* is correctly pronounced Prjäputay where both underlined u are silent as the **u** in **but** or **circus** (also denoted by **ə**), the underlined ä has the sound of **a** in **art**, **alm** or **father** and the underlined ay has the sound of **a** as in **ale**, **pay** or **cape**. In this book where-ever Sanskrit words are transliterated in English, the following modifications to the traditional spellings are made:

- Where-ever in a Sanskrit word, symbol **a** stands for the, vowel **a** sound in **art** or **father**, symbol **ä** has been used. In many Sanskrit texts as well as in Monier Williams' Sanskrit-English dictionary, the vowel **a** sound in **art** or **father** is represented by symbol **ā**. In English dictionaries in the United States, however, symbol **ā** is the sound of vowel **a** in **able** or **cape**, whereas symbol **ä** is used to represent vowel **a** in **art** or **father**. In this book as stated above, symbol **ä** has been used to represent sound of vowel **a** as in **art** or **father**, to be consistent with the pronunciation key of English dictionaries in the United States.
- Where-ever in a Sanskrit word, letter **a** stands for the silent sound **u** in **but** or **circus**, the traditional letter **a**, has been

retained but with the understanding that it signifies the sound of silent **u** (unless it precedes letter **y**).

- The sound **ay** in Sanskrit has been traditionally represented by the letter **e**, even though it sounds like the sound of vowel **a** in *able*. The vowel **e** in English usually has the sounds of **e** in *ebb*, or **e** in *ear* or *equal* and only rarely sounds like **ay** as in *prey*. Therefore, in this book **ay** sound is expressed in its phonetically correct form as **ay**. The exceptions are well known Sanskrit words such as *Veda*—pronounced *wayd* or *wade*, *Deva*—pronounced *dave* or *dayv*, *Ekam*—pronounced *aykum* (with a silent **u**) or *aycome*, where the spellings of the words have retained traditional letter **e** for vowel sound **ay**. When the letter **y** is followed by letter **a** as in *ya* then letter **y** has the sound of **y** in *yacht* or *yes*.
- The **ee** sound as in *eat* or *peel*, in Sanskrit transliterations has been traditionally spelled as **i**, however in this book **ee** sound is written in its phonetically correct form as **ee**.
- In Sanskrit **sh** sound can be soft or hard. The softer **sh** sound is often spelled as **s**. Hence, *Krishna* is often spelled as *Krisna*, however in this book both **sh** sounds are spelled **sh**.
- Sanskrit like Latin has the same one sound for English letters **V** and **W**, and does not differentiate between the two sounds. In this book when the Sanskrit **V** sound is softer, **V** has been used and when Sanskrit **V** sound is somewhat harder **W** has been used.

Therefore, a traditionally spelled word such as *Prajapate* in this book is spelled in its more phonetically correct form as *Prajäpatay*, and *Ishvara* is spelled as *Eeshwara*.

CHAPTER 1

Basic Principles of the Vedic Dharma

Basic Principles of the Vedic Dharma

The fundamental principles in the Vedic Dharma are discussed briefly here to help the reader better understand the description of the various attributes and names of God that will be discussed in the next two chapters. According to Vedas there are three things that are eternal: *God*, the *Soul* and *Prakriti* (physical matter in the subatomic state)¹ (Rig Veda 1: 164: 20, 1: 164: 44, 10: 82: 7, Yajur Veda 40: 1, 40: 15, Atharva Veda 4: 35: 1, 10: 8: 2–4, Shvetashvatra Upanishad 1: 10). God is the *agentive* cause for the creation of the universe, prakriti is the *material* cause of universe, and souls are the *consumers* for whose benefit the universe is created. God is the Creator, Supreme Spirit or Consciousness, and Eternal Bliss. On the other hand prakriti, while it is eternal, by itself is inert. Though, the soul is eternal and is conscious (aware), it usually lacks bliss. The soul has a choice, it can aim towards reaching God—The Eternal Truth, Supreme Consciousness and Supreme Bliss and it-self acquire bliss, or it can be lost in the distractions of prakriti (universe) and remain unfulfilled and lacking in joy. The description of God, soul and prakriti may be summarized as follows:

God is Sat—Chit—Änand (Sachidänand):
Sat = Eternally Exists, Eternal Truth
Chit = Supreme Consciousness
Änand = Supreme Bliss

¹ Please note that this belief in three eternal is based on the Vedas and Upanishads is also called Traitvad (three eternal) and in many ways is quite different than the commonly held views of the Hindu Religion based upon the Purana's and/or Vedanta's advaita—monism beliefs which state that Brahman—God and jiva—the soul are identical and prakriti the physical matter is maya—an illusion (see page # 133 for discussion of the latter).

Soul is Sat—Chit:

Sat = Eternally Exists

Chit = Conscious, aware

Prakriti is only Sat

Sat = Eternally Exists

GOD

There is but One God. God alone is Almighty, the Supreme Power of the universe. God is the Universal Protector and Benefactor. God is everywhere. God is all-powerful and God knows everything: God is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient. God is the Source of all knowledge that is known by truth. God is Supreme Bliss and the source of all bliss. God is the Ultimate Judge who judges us and based upon our karma (deeds) gives appropriate awards. God is Perfection and devoid of any deficiencies. God, however, is also far more than what can be described by words alone and must be experienced within the soul. People call God by different names: Hindus call God (i.e., Supreme Spirit) *OM*, *Eeshwara*, *Paramatma*, *Brahman* or by other names; Jews refer to God as *Yahweh* and *Adonai*; Christians use the words *God* and *Lord* and Muslims the word *Allah* and *Khuda*, but all these names refer to the very same God. Because, God is the focus of this whole book and the following four chapters are primarily devoted to God, therefore, in this chapter discussion of God is limited.

SOUL

All living things have souls. Soul is the principle of life. It is the possession of a soul that differentiates living things from inanimate objects or physical matter. While there is only one God, there are many souls. Like God, the soul is eternal and has con-

scious energy, but its energy is very limited when compared to that of God.

A person's soul according to Vedic scriptures has the following six characteristics:

Ichchhä dvesh prayatna sukha dukha jnäna ätmeno lingamiti.

(Nyäya Darshan 1: 1: 10)

Ätmeno lingamiti

The characteristics
of the souls are

ichchhä

desires,
wishes,

dvesh

jealousy,
covetness,

prayatna

effort,
karma,

sukha

happiness,

dukha

unhappiness,
misery,

and

jnëna.

knowledge,
awareness.

In humans, the soul is the ultimate center of all learning (thought and knowledge); desires and feelings (happiness or suffering); and karma (actions or deeds). Only human souls are considered to have free will and hence are responsible for their actions (see below under karma). A major difference between God and the soul is that only God is Supreme Bliss; souls usually have no or minimal bliss. Also, where as God is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent (Yajur Veda 40: 1 and 8), the soul's similar capabilities are quite limited. Whereas God is All-Knowing—*Sarvajna* the soul is *alpajna*—limited knowledge. Whereas God is Omnipresent the soul at any given time is *ekdeshi*—exists in one place only. Whereas God is the Creator of the universe, the soul's capability to utilize prakriti—physical matter to create material things is quite limited. Despite the limitations of the soul described above, the individual soul can be enlightened by living according to dharma, practicing spiritual yoga and being devoted to God. This will gradually kindle its innate potentials and through the grace of God allow it to ultimately experience bliss—attain *moksha* (see below).

*Karma*¹ (pronounced kurm): Karma means deed and every deed has consequences. Because human beings have free will they may perform any karma they choose, however, the judgment as to rewards or outcome of karma is solely in the hands of God. God as a judge of our actions in the Vedic scriptures is called *Aryamā* or *Karmphaldātā*. Good karmas secure good rewards and bad karmas produce misery. It is said, “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Or “What goes around comes around.” Both are expressions of the same truth. Sometimes the rewards of karma are almost instant: Putting your hand into a flame will yield almost immediate results. In other cases, however, the results may be delayed, perhaps even for a very long time. The good or bad results of a karma may be borne in this life or future lives, and are called *bhoga* and not karma. At times, it may seem that a person who performs good deeds is suffering (this is *bhoga*—the product of previous bad karma), while a person committing sinful acts may appear to be doing well or to be happy (this is *bhoga*—because of past good karma). (Also see pages # 75–76.) However, a person’s current bad deeds will not remain unpunished forever. The consequences of his/her actions will eventually take effect. Ultimately all karmas have good or bad results depending on the nature of the act. The accumulation of good deeds brings us closer to God, peace and bliss both in this life and in the next in the form of rebirth on a higher spiritual plane of existence. The accrual of bad karma produces misery in this life and the next in that we will emerge as a lower life form, such as an animal or plant where one has no free will and is bearing consequences of previous bad karma. Animals and plants are living but a life of bondage—*bhoga*, only bearing the consequences of previous bad karma. Once, the *bhogas*—result of previous bad karmas are exhausted God will

¹ The word karma implies action not fate. However, the word is often misused in the West in statements such as “This is my Karma” implying “this is my fate.” Fate is the result (fruit) of the past Karma. The good or bad results of previous karmas are called *bhoga* not karma. All new karma is in the present and future.

return one to the human form and give the person another chance to perform new karma and seek bliss. This cycle of birth, death and rebirth will continue until the soul has attained *moksha*—the infinite bliss (see below). The joining of the soul with a physical body is beginning of life, and the separation from the body is death. The physical body grows and perishes, the soul, however, is eternal. The soul comes and goes i.e. it changes physical bodies, but it has always existed, it was never born and never dies (Yajur Veda 40: 15, Kathopanishad 2: 18, Geeta 2: 20–25).

Moksha (pronounced Moksh): Moksha means that the soul attains God realization and is liberated from the cycle of rebirth for a very prolonged time but not eternally. In moksha the soul experiences infinite bliss, deep enlightenment and is free of worldly desires. According to the Vedas and Upanishads after the death of the physical body, almost all souls are reborn as a human being or some other life form, however, a select few are liberated and attain moksha. In the state of moksha, the soul is always consciously aware of God who is *Ānandswaroop* (Supreme Bliss), and *Jñānswaroop* (True Knowledge) (see pages # 141–147 for details). The soul, in moksha in the company of God, enjoys infinite bliss, deep enlightenment and God’s benevolence. The absolute goal of all souls is to eventually attain *moksha*.

The phrase ‘the soul attaining God realization’ as used throughout this book means that superconscious state where the individual soul is one to One with God—the Supreme Soul in a state of bliss and enlightenment. The soul attains God realization but does not merge with God nor becomes God and always remains a separate entity. The relationship of the soul and God in this stage is compared to that of an iron ball superheated in the fire to a red hot/golden yellow glow and the fire itself, respectively. The iron ball, looking like a fire ball, is one with the flame but still is an iron ball and not the fire itself. This is the state of perfection of the soul. The soul attains this state of bliss and

enlightenment both in moksha as well as during life (living in physical body) in the state of *samādhi* the highest state spiritual yoga: a superconscious state of meditation where God is eventually revealed and the soul is consciously aware of God.

The means for attaining moksha is to live according to dharma (see below), practice meditation with faith and devotion, further one's spiritual knowledge and do selfless deeds. Together these things constitute the path of spiritual yoga. Over time, when these practices become so intense that a person totally surrenders to God and devotes his or her life to seeking God and helping others and not doing any deeds for personal gratification, then the person's soul is liberated, or moksha is attained. As stated above, the soul attains God realization but does not merge with God or become God, but remains a separate entity and, after a very long time, will again be born as a spiritually endowed human being. Having been born again though, the soul is nevertheless subject to all the rules and conditions that apply to all human beings.

Dharma (pronounced dhurm): The word dharma is often translated in English as religion but actually refers to a moral or virtuous way of living. This path requires adherence to moral principles in all aspects of one's life and includes a devotion to truth in thought, word and deed as well as love and compassion for other beings. It involves the practice of truth, forgiveness, cultivation of inner and outer purity, directing one's mind and senses towards virtuous deeds and away from sin, not coveting those things that belong to others, reducing attachments to worldly things, controlling anger, and completing all actions in a thoughtful and patient manner (Manusmriti 6: 92). In addition, it is not enough to be content with one's own self-improvement; one must be generous and help others to improve their lives too. The dharma principles are based on teachings found in the Vedas and other related scriptures. (See preface for details on Vedas page # xi.)

PRAKRITI (PHYSICAL MATTER)

Prakriti (pronounced *prukriti*) means physical matter in subatomic state. Physical matter is also eternal but it is neither conscious nor bestows bliss because it is innately inert. From time to time, physical matter is either activated and transformed by God's creative power into the manifest universe as we know it (*srishti*), or inactivated and dissolved (*pralaya*) back into its dormant primal state (Rig Veda 10: 190: 1–3). A single cycle of activation and dissolution of the universe is referred to as Brahma's (God's) One Day. Such cycles of creation and dissolution go on forever in an infinite series of universes. The energy needed for the constant motion of the universe (movement of the stars and galaxies as well as the movement of water and wind on the earth) is not spontaneous but was provided by God at the beginning of each creation (the equivalent of *Big Bang*). God is the Master Architect and the Power that maintains order in the universe.

All nonliving objects, as well as physical bodies of all living things, are composed of *prakriti* i.e. matter, the material cause of the universe. Without the soul, however, our physical body is inert. Once the soul leaves at a person's death, the physical body made from matter begins to disintegrate. Metaphorically, the physical body arose from the ashes (physical matter) and will end as ashes (either by cremation or burial).

The answer to the question why God created the universe is that God provides a place for the souls to move closer to Him and eventually attain bliss. It is only in the context of the universe (*prakriti*) that a person can live and grow and learn right from wrong. Karma and the exercise of free will are only possible within the setting of the universe. Hence, *prakriti* is essential; however, the soul must learn to utilize the resources of the universe wisely so that the soul moves towards God and does not get lost amid the distractions of the material world. God is perfec-

tion, He does not need the universe for Himself, but the universe is a necessity for the souls, the consumers of prakriti. This is the only reason that God periodically creates the manifest universe. Suggestions that God created the universe for personal pleasure (because He was bored) or for an audience of human beings, angels or elders seem illogical and humorous.

The following four mantras from the Vedas explain the relationship of God, souls and prakriti in a succinct manner.

Eeshä väsyamidam sarvam yadkincha jagatyäm jagat.

Tayna tyaktayna bhunjeethä mä gridhah kasya swidhanam.

(Yajur Veda 40: 1)

Human beings, listen!

<i>Eeshä</i>	<i>väsyam</i>	<i>idam</i>	<i>sarvam</i>
God, the Master of all	dwells	here around you	everywhere,
riches in the universe			

<i>yadkincha</i>	<i>jagatyäm jagat</i>
in every spot you can imagine,	in every region of this vast and
	changing universe.

<i>Tayna</i>	<i>tyaktayna</i>
Therefore, you should	without attachment or craving
	(share with others),

bhunjeethä
 enjoy the riches which God has given you and which you
 have earned by your actions

<i>mä gridhah</i>	<i>kasya swidhanam</i>
do not be greedy and do not covet	those riches which belong to others.

This Veda mantra is a message to various human beings i.e. individual souls to always remember that Eesha—God, the Supreme Master is present everywhere in the vast universe which is made of prakriti. When a person develops a deep inner faith that God is present throughout the universe including inside

one's soul as his/her closest companion, and that God protects and guides him/her (through the inner voice of the soul), then he/she will never feel alone. This creates a sense of inner security and integrity within the person. A person with this belief becomes fearless in the pursuit of truth and does not sway from the correct path. Such a person always seeks God's approval rather than that of other people.

The other meaning of the word *Eesha* in this mantra is that God is the Master Nurturer of the entire spiritual and the physical wealth in the universe. God is the Master of abundance. All wealth belongs ultimately to God. God is the Universal Benefactor. Only God can fulfill both our physical and spiritual needs. We need only ask God for His blessings and do not need to ask from others.

The last three words of the first line of this mantra (*yadkincha jagatyam jagat*) make it clear that the omnipresence of God refers to every last place in the universe (prakriti), whether or not it can be imagined. It also reminds us that God's universe is in constant motion and undergoing continuous change. Therefore, we must remain active and forever try to improve ourselves. This mantra encourages us to always make the effort and to try to do good deeds that are explained in the second line of this mantra.

The second line of this mantra counsels us to live, prosper and enjoy the things of this physical world (prakriti) without being attached to them. It is useless to covet earthly riches since you will not be able to take them with you when you die; only the results of your deeds (karma) will accompany you. Above all, we are told not to be greedy and desire those things that belong to others. Instead, we should be content with those things that we have earned through our honest labor. In the Vedas greed is considered to be one of the root causes of unhappiness and misery in life. We are also counseled to share what we have with others, to be generous and giving, which in contrast to greed, brings peace and

happiness in life. We are only stewards of those things that are given to us on earth since all things really belong solely to God. Our goal is to attain God and find bliss and not to get enmeshed in transitory worldly pleasures and riches.

Dvä suparnä sayujä sakhäyā samānam vraksham pari shsvajätay.

Tyoh anyah pippalam swädu ati anashnan anyah abhi chäksheeti.

<i>Dvä suparnä</i> Two beautiful birds	<i>sayujä sakhäyā</i> who are intimate friends, i.e. companions	<i>pari shsvajätay</i> are sitting intimately close to each other
<i>samānam vraksham.</i> on the same tree.	<i>Tayoh anyah</i> Among them, one	<i>pippalam swädu ati</i> is eating and enjoying the fruits of the tree
<i>anyah</i> While the other bird	<i>anashnan</i> is not eating, but	<i>abhi chäksheeti.</i> is observing the first bird, as a supervisor.

This mantra uses the allegory of two birds and the tree to beautifully represent the relationship of God, the soul and the material world (prakriti). The first bird represents the soul that is enjoying the fruits of the tree i.e. prakriti. While the first bird is free to pluck the fruit and enjoy it, the bird is being observed and supervised by the second bird, God who is the most intimate companion of the soul (see pages # 111–113 under Mitra and Sakha). As stated in the previous mantra, God, by being the inner voice to the soul, guides the soul to do the right thing, but at the same time God allows the soul freedom (free will) to do what the soul wants (also see page # 80). God as the supervisor observes and judges the karmas of the soul and gives appropriate awards but does not impose or use force on the soul like a tyrant to do something.

Yo bhootänäm adhipatih yasmin lokah adhi shritah.

Ya eeshay mahato mahän tayna grahnämi tväm aham mayi grahnämi tväm aham. (Yajur Veda 20: 32)

<i>Yo adhipatih</i>	<i>bhootänäm</i>	<i>yasmin adhi shritah</i>	<i>lokah.</i>
He, God is the Master	of all living beings	who governs and sustains,	all abodes, i.e. stars, galaxies.

<i>Ya eeshay</i>	<i>mahato mahän</i>	<i>tayna</i>	<i>aham grahnämi tväm</i>
He, God is the Master, of all riches	He is Greater than the greatest	therefore,	I accept You (God) as my Master

<i>mayi</i>	<i>aham grahnämi tväm.</i>
inside me	with meditation, I make a conscious home for You.

The mantra describes God as the Master of all living beings as well as the whole universe. It is God who governs and sustains all the stars and galaxies that may be home to living beings. In this mantra, like the first mantra God is addressed as the Master of the entire spiritual and the physical wealth in the universe i.e. God is the Master of abundance. Next, God is described as Greater than the greatest i.e. God alone is Almighty or Omnipotent. A devotee after acknowledging God's Supreme qualities and his/her own limitations states, "Dear God, I accept You as my Supreme Master, I meditate on You and and make a conscious home for You in my soul. I seek Your grace to follow the right path so that I may get consciously close to You i.e. I may always be blessed by You."

Väyur anilam amritam atha idam bhasmäntam shariram.

Om krato smara kilve smara kritam smara. (Yajur Veda 40: 15)

<i>Vayur</i>	<i>anilam</i>	<i>amritam</i>
The soul is always doing deeds.	It is not made up of physical matter.	It is immortal.

atha idam shariram bhasmantam. Krato
 On the other hand, this, body turns to ashes. O! human being,
 ceaseless
 performer,

Om smara kilve smara kritam smara.
 always remember Almighty God, Remember God to. Remember God
 our Protector and Benefactor. gain strength to perform your
 appropriate duties

This mantra describes the relationship between the physical body, the soul and God and gives advice on how one should live until the end of one's life. The mantra affirms that the soul is immortal; the soul does not contain physical matter and does not die with the death of the physical body. The soul has conscious energy and is always active performing one or the other karma. It is the soul that keeps us alive. At the time of the death of our physical body, depending on our karma, God gives our soul a new body and this cycle continues until moksha is obtained.

The body, on the other hand, is made of physical matter (prakriti) and is prone to destruction and disintegration. This physical body that we spend hours on, meeting its need for food, decorating it and providing it with sensual pleasures is nothing without the soul and will rot without it. It arose from ashes (physical matter) and will end in ashes (either by cremation or burial).

The mantra next addresses the soul as the ceaseless performer of one or the other deeds and reminds it to always remember God, OM. "God alone is your Protector and Master and your goal is to reach Him and not to focus on physical pleasures. Remember God to gain strength. Whenever you are discouraged, remember God your Protector and Benefactor, and your troubles will disappear. You will find the courage and strength to go on and will feel revitalized." It then says to the soul, "Remember God while doing your deeds. God will help you find the difference between virtuous and bad deeds and will guide you along the right path."

In all the four mantras described above, God, soul and the material world are clearly described as three separate entities. This belief in the three eternal based on the Vedas and Upanishads is also called *Traitvad* (three eternal) and in many ways is quite different from the commonly held views of the Hindu Religion based upon the Vedanta's *advaita*—monism beliefs which state that Brahman—God and jiva—the soul are identical and prakriti the physical matter is maya—an illusion or is illusory (see pages # 133–135 for discussion of the *advaita*—monism beliefs). These four mantras describe God (in the singular) as the Master of all souls (in the plural) and the universe. In these mantras, the soul is seeking God's guidance to follow the right path and get consciously close to Him but nowhere do the mantras state or imply that the soul and God are identical. The mantras also state that God is Omnipresent and all knowing. However, neither these four mantras, nor for that matter any mantra in the Vedas has ever stated that the soul is omnipresent, all knowing or same as God. The soul's abilities as stated earlier in this chapter have always been recognized as quite limited. The four mantras also imply that in contrast to God and the souls, the matter by itself is innately inert. God is the Master of the universe and it is God who activates the changes in the universe. The soul on the other hand can utilize prakriti—matter only in a limited manner for its enjoyment, but is cautioned to use prakriti (matter) wisely and not get lost in its distractions.

The following story captures both the essence of the Vedic Dharma and how God is perceived in it. The story serves as an excellent basis for understanding more detailed philosophical discussions that follow in the next four chapters. There have been many versions of this story told over the years in India. The version recounted here is based on one of the oldest legends.

WHAT DOES GOD DO? : THE SERVANT AND THE KING

A long time ago there was a brave king who ruled in India and had many vassal kings in his empire. He was also interested in spiritual matters and would often ask questions concerning God and the soul. One day he asked one of his senior counselors the following three questions:

1. Where does God live?
2. What does God do?
3. How does one find God?

He gave the counselor three days to answer these questions and further stipulated that the answers should be such that they are easily understood by the common folks in his kingdom. During the three-day period, the counselor thought deeply about the questions and sought advice from other spiritual leaders. Despite his efforts, he was not sure that the king would be satisfied with the responses that he had to offer.

His servant noticed that the master was very upset and asked him what was wrong. The master tartly remarked that the king had given him the task of finding answers for three spiritual questions, and thus far he had failed to find satisfactory answers. When the servant offered to help, the counselor became irritated. Time was running out, and if the spiritual leaders could not be of help, it was ridiculous to think that an ordinary servant could do better than others. The servant finally convinced the counselor, to reveal the three questions posed by the king.

To the counselor's surprise the servant answered, "Master, do not be worried. I can answer the questions to the king's satisfaction." The counselor immediately demanded the answers, but the servant insisted that he would tell them only to the king. The counselor became furious with the servant and said to him,

“You want to make a fool out of me by presenting an idiot like you to the king to answer his questions.” The servant replied, “Master, you may call me an idiot if you wish, but so far you have not found any appropriate answers to the questions and time is running out. I suggest that you tell the king that I can answer his questions to his satisfaction, and if I fail then he can chop off my head for my audacity.”

The counselor considered the situation for a moment and realized that there was no other satisfactory solution to his predicament. He therefore agreed to present his servant to the king after admitting his own failure to find acceptable answers. The king was quite amused by the situation, but after some contemplation told the servant, “I am willing to listen to your answers since I realize that knowledge is not restricted to anointed leaders and master teachers. However, I want to remind you that failure will be punished with decapitation. Please begin.”

Question 1: Where does God live?

The servant requested a bowl of milk before answering the question. This was brought to him. The servant put his right index finger into the milk and twirled it around as though he were looking for something in the bowl. The king shouted at him, “What kind of foolishness is this? What are you doing?” The servant replied, “Your majesty, I am looking for butter.” The king shouted, “You are a fool! Even a child knows that you cannot find butter in the milk by stirring it around with your finger. To get butter you must first separate the cream and then churn it.”

The servant replied, “Your majesty, you have already indirectly answered your first question. Just as the butter exists everywhere in the milk but you cannot see it until you properly process it, so does God live in every part of the universe even though you do not see Him with your eyes. God is everywhere. You cannot hide from God. God is Omnipresent, both within you and outside

of you. You do not have to go to the mountain top, into a cave or to a holy place to find God. Wherever you are that makes you think of God is holy, and He is there; eventually that becomes everywhere in the universe. You can find God while staying right here in your palace. I hope I have answered your first question to your satisfaction.” The king was delighted because he had never heard such a simple yet elegant way of expressing the truth that God is everywhere.

Question 2: What does God do?

The servant asked the king if he posed the question as a student or as the ruler of the nation. The king humbly replied, “Though I am king of the country, I ask this question as a student.” The servant then said, “Your majesty, we have an old tradition in India that whenever a student asks a question from a teacher (guru), the student honors the teacher by having the teacher sit in the more important seat.” The king knew this tradition well, so he offered his throne to the servant while he himself took the servant’s seat. The servant then replied, “Your majesty, this is just what God can do and often does. He can make kings out of servants and servants out of kings. We must all remember that our power on earth is transient. Great empires have come and gone, sometimes by being conquered by foreign foes and sometimes by internal decay and disintegration, and God sometimes causes their disruption with natural disasters. God is the Master of the universe and of all that is in it. God is the final Judge. As human beings we can control our karma but not its rewards. Based upon our karma, God metes out either rewards or punishments. As you sow, so shall you reap. God knows everything that happens in the universe, even our thoughts. No sinful deed can ever be hidden from God. Therefore, everyone should live righteously according to the dictates of dharma, and even a king is not exempt. He must always consider the welfare of his subjects his most important

duty by placing it before his own wishes, desires and personal pleasures. We must always remember that God is Omnipotent and Omniscient.” The king was delighted with the answer to his second question as well.

Question 3: How does one find God?

The servant answered, “Your majesty, you have already answered part of your own question when you said that you must properly process the milk in order to get butter from it. This is the way it is for us. To find God we must live according to the principles of dharma and perform deeds that uplift our souls and help our fellow human beings. God is perceived by our soul, not our eyes. The practice of yoga (spiritual yoga—meditation) with faith and devotion and the acquisition of knowledge from the Vedas will slowly but surely advance us toward God. Gradually, as our devotion to God becomes so focused that every moment of our life is used to seek God and help others, rather than living for personal pleasures, then shall we attain God realization.”

The king was so overcome with joy at the answers the servant had given to his three questions that he made the servant his chief spiritual counselor.

CHAPTER 2

One God

&

The Attributes of God

Based on the Vedas

The most important message of the Vedas is that, there is but One God who alone is Almighty as well as the Supreme Master of the universe, and He alone is worthy of worship. God is the Supreme Consciousness (Spirit) and the source of all knowledge that is known through truth. God is eternal. He was never born, and thus, will never die. God has neither shape nor form, yet is present everywhere permeating every part of the universe from that which is nearest to us to that which is farthest away. God is the Universal Protector and Benefactor as well as God is the Ultimate Judge who judges us and based upon our karma (deeds) gives appropriate awards. God is Perfection and the source of all bliss—He is Supreme Bliss. It is only by truly knowing God that one can acquire peace and eventually bliss in one's own life. God can not be described by words alone and must be experienced within the soul. This chapter discusses both the Oneness of God and the attributes of God in detail based on the Vedas (See preface pages xi–xv for details on the Vedas).

ONE GOD

*Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti.*¹ (Rigveda 1: 164: 46 and Atharvaveda 9: 10: 28).

<i>Ekam</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Vipra</i>	<i>Vadanti</i>	<i>Bahudha</i>
One, God	exists eternally,	wise persons	call God	by many names.

This important mantra segment from the Vedas states that God is One, but wise persons call him by different names. Vedas and related scriptures (as well as Hindus) call God *OM*, *Paramatma*, *Parameshwara*, *Brahman* and by many other names (discussed in detail in the next chapter); Jews refer to God as *Yahweh* and

¹ This is a segment of a mantra. The full mantra is described and discussed on page # 91.

Adonai; Christians use the words *God*, *Lord* and *Heavenly Father* and Muslims the word *Allah* and *Khuda*, but all these names refer to the very same God. The following two examples are sometimes quoted in India to explain the Oneness of God and the reason why He has so many names:

There is only one thing in the world that we know by the name water, but water is often called by different names depending upon its physical state and locality. When frozen it is called ice. When ice covers a large area on land it is called glacier and in a sea an iceberg. Water can also be in the form of rain, snow, sleet, hail, slush, or dew. Water can be contained in a well, a spring, a creek, a reservoir, a pool, a pond, a lake, a brook, a stream, a river, a bay, the sea or an ocean. It can be as fine as a light mist, appear as a burst of steam or be relentless and fierce during a monsoon downpour. When water from one source is mixed with water from another source, it is not possible to separate the sources because it just blends together as water. So too, there is only One God and even though He is called so many different names because of His many attributes, He remains the same God.

The second illustration uses the names given to one person. Say, for example, someone is named Ram. He might be called son by his parents, husband or spouse by his wife, father by his children, grandfather by his grandchildren, brother by his siblings, friend or buddy by his friends, mentor or teacher by his students and so on but he is just one person with different names or descriptions. Because Ram is his personal name, he can be called Ram by all of his relatives or friends, however, he can not be called father or brother by all of them. Similarly God's names like Om, Parameshwara, Paramatma are restricted to God alone (see below), while names such as *Agni*, *Indra*, *Mitra* or *Soma* depending upon the context may mean God or other secular things. (See pages # 90–126).

Vedas emphasize oneness of God in a variety of different ways

in many other mantras, as described below:

Ekam santam bahudhā kalpayanti. (Rig Veda 10: 114: 5)

<i>Ekam</i>	<i>kalpayanti santam</i>	<i>bahudhā</i>
One God	is called	by many names

Ya eka it tamu shtuhi krashtinām visharshanih. Patirjajnay vrashkratu. (Rig Veda 6: 45: 16)

Human beings, listen!

<i>Tamu shtuhi it</i>	<i>ya eka</i>	<i>visharshanih</i>	<i>krashtinām.</i>
You should pray to or praise Him, God	Who Alone is, One who is,	Omniscient and perfectly knows	activities of all human beings.

<i>Patirjajnay</i>	<i>vrashkratu.</i>
He is the Master of the Universe	and is Almighty and showers us with beneficial riches.

Chhandogya Upanishad similarly emphasizes that there is only One God, without there being a second.

Ekam eva adviteeyam. (Chhandogya Upanishad 6: 2: 1 and 2)

<i>Ekam eva</i>	<i>adviteeyam</i>
God is One only	there is no second God.

In the 41 mantras from the Vedas referenced below the word *eka* or *ekam* (pronounced as *ayka* and *aykum*, sometimes also spelled as *ayka* and *aykum*) is used to emphasize One God even though God has been given different names: Rig Veda 1: 7: 9; Rig 1: 52: 14; Rig 1: 84: 7; Rig 1: 100 : 7; Rig 1: 164: 46; Rig 5: 81: 1; Rig 6: 22: 1; Rig 6: 36: 4; Rig 6: 45: 16; Rig 7: 35: 13; Rig 8: 1: 27; Rig 8: 6: 41; Rig 8: 25: 16; Rig 10: 81: 3; Rig 10: 82: 2 and 3; Rig 10: 91: 3; Rig Veda 10: 114: 5; Rig 10: 121: 1, 3, 7 and 8; Yajur Veda 17: 19, 26 and 27; Yajur 27: 26; Atharva Veda 2: 1: 3; Atharva 2: 2: 1 and 2; Atharva 7: 21; 1; Atharva 10: 8: 11 and 28; Atharva 13: 4: 12, 13, 15–22 and 24.

There are hundreds of other mantras in the Vedas that do not use the word *eka* or *ayka* but emphasize Oneness of God by addressing Him, 'HE IS, YOU ALONE, or NONE OTHER THAN YOU is Almighty, Creator, our Ultimate Father and Mother, Master of the universe' e.g. Rig Veda 1: 52: 13; Rig 1: 91: 5; Rig 2: 1: 3; Rig 2: 1: 4; Rig 2: 1: 6; Rig 6: 18: 12; Rig 7: 32: 23; Rig 8: 64: 3; Rig 8: 95: 3; Rig 8: 98: 11; Rig 10: 121: 10; Yajur Veda 32: 1; Saam Veda 3: 1; 10; Atharva Veda 10: 8: 44; Atharva 13: 4: 1: 4. For example the following three mantras described below explain the Oneness of God as follows:

Na tvävän anyo divyo na pärthivo na jätö na janishyatay.

(Rig Veda 7: 32: 23)

<i>Na tvävän anyo divyo</i>	<i>na pärthivo na jätö na janishyatay.</i>
Dear God, there is nobody else	no God has ever been born on the earth
besides You who is Divine	and no God will ever be born
	in the future.

Prajäpatay na tvat-aytäni-anyo vishvä jätäni paritä babhuva.

(Rig Veda 10: 121: 10).

<i>Prajäpatay</i>	<i>na tvat anyo</i>	<i>paritä babhuva</i>
Master or Lord	none other than You is	protecting and controlling
of all people, God	i.e. You Alone are,	

aytäni vishvä jätäni.
this entire created universe.

Sa no bandhur janitä sa vidhätä dhämäni veda bhuvanäni vishvä. (Yajur Veda 32: 10)

<i>Sa</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>bandhur</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>janitä</i>
He, God (alone) is our	closest kin (relation),	He, God is	the Creator of	universe,

<i>vidhätä</i>	<i>dhämäni veda bhuvanäni vishvä.</i>
Sustainer of universe,	He knows all of the universe's stars and galaxies.

Finally, the following mantra from Atharva Veda emphasizes beyond any doubt that there is One and only One God. A person who clearly knows that there is only One God and then seeks that Supreme Being, he/she gradually gets closer to God and finally attains Him. Such a person does not seek God's alleged incarnations, intermediaries or deities.

Na dviteeyo na triteeyash chhatturtho na pyuchyatay.

Ya aytam devam ekvratam veda. (Atharva Veda 13: 4: 16)

<i>Na dviteeyo</i>	<i>na triteeyash</i>	<i>chhatturtho na</i>	<i>pyuchyatay.</i>
There is no second	no third	no fourth	God in existence.

<i>Ya</i>	<i>aytam devam ekvratam veda.</i>
A person who	knows that there is only One Supreme Divine Being and then seeks Him, he/she gradually attains Him.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The attributes of God according to the Vedas and the Upanishads are as follows: God is *omnipotent*, *omnipresent* and *omniscient*. God is *omnipotent*, the Master of the universe with all its riches. God alone is Almighty, the Ultimate Protector and Universal Benefactor. God is the Highest Power and the Supreme Force. God is the ultimate source of all activity in the universe. God is eternal, He was never born, and thus, will never die. He is the Supreme Consciousness. God is the Reality that never changes. God is *omnipresent*: He has neither shape nor form, yet is present everywhere, permeating every part of the universe from that which is nearest to us to that which is farthest away. There is no need to travel to "holy" places to find God, for He is right here, within us and around us. God is the closest entity to us because He even resides inside the soul. God is *omniscient*: He knows everything that happens in the entire universe even

the minutest detail and yet is also the master of all spiritual and secular knowledge that is known through truth. God is kind and full of love, but He is also just. God is perfection. God is the source of all bliss—He is Supreme Bliss.

There are hundreds of Veda mantras that directly or indirectly describe the attributes of God. The following selected sixteen Veda mantras give some of the the best descriptions of the many attributes of God. All of these mantras are used for prayer. Prayer to God in the Vedic scriptures is divided into three interconnected components: *Stuti*, *Prārthana* and *Upāsana*.

***Stuti*:** Stuti is usually translated in English as praise of God or singing about God's glory. It's a reminder that God alone is Almighty and none else. Stuti, however, is not flattery of God; true stuti is sincere. Stuti, at a deeper level, implies intense love and awareness of the attributes of God as well as progressive incorporation of a component of it (wherever possible or applicable) in one's own personal life e.g. stuti reminds us that God is kind, just and loving, qualities that we need to acquire if we are to come close to God.

***Prārthana*:** Prārthana means prayer to God. After making one's best effort, it is asking God, The Universal Benefactor, for His blessings for being able to fulfill the request. Prayer is asking for God's inspiration and help so that we may gain wisdom, strength and determination to live a virtuous life, learn humility and to help fellow human beings. Praying teaches us humility and reminds us that we are not all powerful like God. It also helps us acknowledge our limitations and our vanity so that we know where we need to improve. Praying also reminds us of our moral duties (dharma) both to ourselves and to others and further shows us that we should seek God's counsel first and then that of our fellow humans and not the other way around.

Upāsana: Upāsana literally means getting close to God. Upāsana implies meditation and through the practice of yoga, realization and attainment of the Supreme Being. Upāsana is a constant effort and perfection occurs gradually as yoga—meditation practices become so intense that a person totally surrenders to God and devotes his or her life to seeking God and helping others and not doing any deeds for personal gratification.

Of the following sixteen Veda mantras, some incorporate all three components of the prayer, where as in the others one or the other component predominates.

Mantra #1: Omnipresent God is Pure Radiance and has no Shape or Form

Sa paryagät shukram akäyam avarnam asnäviram shudham apäpviddham.

Kavirmaneeshee paribhuh svayambhuh yäthätathyatoarthän vyadadhät shäshvatibhyah samäbhyah. (Yajur Veda 40:8)

Sa God,	paryagät is located everywhere,	shukram is pure radiance, Supreme Light	akäyam is bodiless, without form or shape
avarnam is without any bodily vulnerability, like hunger and disease	asnäviram is devoid of any nerves or sinews, is not made of flesh	shudham is completely pure and holy	
apäpviddham is untouched by sin or evil.	Kavir God is Omniscient and knows the minutest details of everything,	maneeshee Wisest, Seer, Most knowledgeable, Storehouse of knowledge	
paribhuh transcends time,	swayambhuh Self-existent, never born nor dies,	shäshvatibhyah since eternity	vyadadhät has been distributing, providing

yäthätathyato
appropriate, based on our deeds

arthän
all provisions

samäbhyah
for all beings.

In this mantra God is described as the Total Master of the Universe. Attributes of God that are evident in this mantra are as follows:

- God is everywhere; God is omnipresent; it is impossible to hide oneself or one's actions from God.
- God is Pure Radiance. God is the Supreme Light. God is the Source of all enlightenment and knowledge that is known through truth. It is only by finding God that one can achieve enlightenment and true wisdom in life.
- God has no physical body; God is not flesh and blood. God has no bodily vulnerabilities such as hunger and disease. Further, God is neither masculine nor feminine but simply God. Of course, it is possible to address God as either Father or Mother, and He or She, but this does not make God either male or female. God is devoid of shape and form. God does not exist in any anthropomorphic form; at best, He can only be symbolically described in such form. Therefore, it is not possible to depict God in a painting, idol, icon or a statue because God is Supreme Consciousness and not a physical entity.
- God was not born and will never die. The Vedas disagree with the concept of God being incarnated in human form or directly fathering a child. Although, most Hindus believe that God was born as Rama and Krishna, just as Christians believe Jesus is God. The Sanskrit word for God's incarnation is *Avatär*. (Also see page # 140.) *Avatär* means something that descends from heaven. God being omnipresent, is already present everywhere, therefore, how can he descend from anywhere? Moreover, if God were to incarnate or father a child, what percentage (fraction) of Him incarnates and

what fraction is left behind? Everything that is born must die and end, but as stated above God is eternal and has neither a beginning nor an end.

- **God transcends time.** God always has been and always will be. God existed before time and before eternity and will exist after the end of time and beyond eternity.
- **God knows everything; God is omniscient.** God the Seer has the ultimate vision and knows the smallest details about everything that exists, seen or unseen.
- **God is pure and holy, thus devoid of any evil and any sin.** It is only by following God's path that one can overcome evil and find holiness in one's own life. Pilgrimages to "Sacred or holy places" or shrines are only important in that they remind a person about God and help him/her to find God, otherwise pilgrimages are tantamount to sightseeing of the historic (or legendary) holy places of the different faiths. Bathing in the river Ganga (Ganges), being sprinkled with holy water in a Hindu temple, being baptized with holy water in a Christian church, or going to Mecca and circling Kaaba do not provide salvation; salvation is only found by good deeds and devotion to God.
- **God alone is the Ultimate Master and Karmaphaldātā—Final Judge in the Universe.** He possesses all the riches in the universe and distributes them appropriately to all depending upon the past and present karmas—deeds. God alone is omnipotent.
- **God is the Ultimate Benefactor and Provider.** God alone nurtures and cares for the earth and the universe. God provides for the needs of all living things whether man, bird, animal or other creature. Therefore, God will always provide for our needs if we make the necessary effort.

Therefore, it is essential that we pray only to God the Ultimate Reality and Supreme Consciousness and none else.

Manta #2: God is Embodiment of Bliss, Wisdom, Virtue and Perfection

Akämo dheero amritah swayambhuh rassayn tripto na kutashchnonah.

Tamayva vidwän na vibhäya mrityo ätmänam dheeram ajaram yuvänam. (Atharva Veda 10: 8: 44)

<i>Akämo</i>		<i>dheero</i>		<i>amritah</i>		<i>swayambhuh</i>
God is without	and is	Embodiment of		Immortal		Self-existent,
any desires		wisdom and virtue,		Supreme Bliss,		never born
						never dies,

<i>rassayn tripto</i>	<i>na kutashchnonah.</i>	<i>Tamayva vidwän ätmänam</i>
saturated with bliss,	has no deficiencies	One (a person) who knows the
Supreme Bliss,	i.e. is Embodiment	Supreme Soul,
	of Perfection.	

<i>dheeram</i>	<i>ajaram</i>	<i>yuvänam</i>	<i>na vibhäya mrityo.</i>
God, all knowing	God, who never	God, who	that person has
Supreme Virtue,	ages or withers,	like youth is	no fears
		always full	especially fear
		of vitality,	of death.

In this mantra God is described as all knowing and the Source of Ultimate Wisdom and Virtue. Also, God is eternal, unaging, and unchanging. God is self-existent, He is never born and never dies for He is immortal. He always has been and always will be. God unlike humans does not age or wither, or get tired; like youth God is full of vitality. God has no deficiencies or short comings of any kind. He is Ultimate Perfection. Finally, God is Supreme Bliss and by only knowing Him, one loses all fears in life especially the fear of death and finds bliss in one's own life.

All human beings want happiness and joy (*sukham*) and no

body wants miseries or fears (*dukham*) especially fear of death, even though we all know, try as we may, one day we will die. Where do human beings look for happiness (*sukham*)? They seek it in worldly goods and pleasures, as well as in wealth. The pleasures of the worldly goods, however, are usually short lived and their loss leads to unhappiness (*dukham*). Even the continued presence of worldly goods or pleasures does not give lasting happiness and people look for something new and more exciting to renew their happiness. If worldly goods could give lasting happiness, the super-wealthy of the world would have a monopoly on happiness (like on wealth) and deprive others of finding happiness in life. Thank God, that lasting happiness or joy—bliss comes only from God and it is available to everyone free of charge. The mantra emphasizes that without truly knowing God i.e. having deep abiding faith in Him, and surrendering to God and following His path through meditation, and finally the grace of God, one can not find bliss in one's life. Attainment of God realization and such pure bliss removes all the fears of a person, especially the fear of death because when one has God's constant companionship and bliss, the question of fear becomes superfluous.

God has no deficiencies, He is Perfection. God's attributes such as eternity, immortality, agelessness, can only occur in an entity that is perfect. People from various faiths often say that they pray to please God, alternately others state that they pray so that God would be pleased with them. Is God a person like human beings, who is at times happy and at other times unhappy? Also, is a fraction of God happy with a few persons and a different fraction unhappy with other persons simultaneously? Vedas say that God is always full of bliss and perfection. Happiness and unhappiness are characteristics of humans and not of God. Many preachers (belonging to all faiths) have cajoled their parishioners by stating, "If you do such and such, God will

get angry with you and punish you and at times even add that God will punish your children and progeny.” Anger is a human emotion not God’s emotion. God is beyond emotion. God does not get angry. God is a loving benevolent God and not a vengeful tyrant. In God’s view there are no Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Jews or Buddhists; instead we are all human beings and He loves all of us. God is not prejudiced and does not favor one religious or racial group over the other despite the contrary claims of various religions. God, being a Perfect Judge, based upon our karma gives us appropriate rewards, or punishments that we may characterize as misery or God’s anger. An advanced devotee on the other hand accepts whatever miseries come his/her way with joy recognizing that finally he/she is getting over the results (*bhoga*) of previous bad karmas, and therefore, based on the present good karmas he/she is getting closer to God. This is true surrender to God, when one accepts what comes in life with equanimity and without a hint of complaint. The purpose of yoga is to make mind tranquil, whereby the soul is not distracted by the senses or the mind and becomes consciously aware of God (Who being inside the soul is the closest entity to the soul but without us usually being aware), and gets closer and closer to God. It is only by knowing God, the Ultimate Source of wisdom, we can aim at gaining perfection and greater harmony in our lives.

Mantras #3 & #4: The Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient God

*Anayjadekam manaso javeeyo nainad deva apnuvan
purvamarshat.*

*Taddhāvatonyānatyayti tishthattasminnapo mātārishvā
dadhāti.*

<i>Ekam</i>	<i>anayjad</i>	<i>manaso javeeyo</i>	<i>nainad</i>
That One, God	does not move	but is much swifter than the mind;	the senses

God is inside everything because He is minuter than the minutest thing. He is aware of everything that is going on even in the most secret recesses of our minds because He resides even inside our souls (see pages 142–144 under Antaryāmi). God also

knows everything that is happening outside of all things because God is outside everything. All living and non-living things, planets, stars and galaxies reside in God's universe and God surrounds all of them. Omnipresent and Omniscient God is limitless; He is not bound by time or space. There is no power stronger than God. Omnipotent God, remaining still, outruns and outdoes everything else in the universe.

God also dwells in our soul. He is the nearest entity to us. Wise persons know that God resides inside their souls always inspiring them when they do something right and causing an aversion when they do something wrong. They do not have to travel to a sacred or a holy place to find Him. Some people who are not as wise think that, if God exists, He dwells at some faraway place in the universe called heaven. If we choose to make God a remote entity, then God will truly feel far away from us, although He is always within us and outside all around us. In the Gospel of Thomas¹: Saying # 3, Jesus says the same 'the Kingdom is within you and it is outside of you' and in Saying # 113 Jesus says 'the Kingdom of the Father is already spread out on the earth, and people aren't aware of it.'

God cannot be perceived by our senses because they are so limited in scope. As human beings living on the earth, we cannot even appreciate that the earth at the equator turns on its axis at about 1,000 miles per hour and revolves around the sun at about 66,000 miles per hour. The miniscule subatomic Solar wind particles pass through our body all the time and we are not even aware of it. There are also so many things that we can't see or feel around us. The modern 'String Theory' of the universe and subatomic physical matter suggests that the ultimate miniscule strings vibrate in perhaps eleven different dimensions

¹ This view of God in the Gospel of Thomas is quite different from that in the canonical four Gospels of the New Testament which imply that Kingdom of Heaven is to arrive in the future.

instead of the usual four dimensions we know namely the three planes (front to back, right to left, and up to down), and time. Even modern science that has proposed the String Theory is itself incapable of proving it by scientific experiments. Science has a long way to go to understand the vast universe such as its dimensions, composition, the number of galaxies etc. Currently more than 90% of the universe's mass is considered to be Dark Matter and more than 70% of universe's energy is considered to be Dark Energy despite some speculations for their basis. This is not a castigation of science but rather a statement about the current abilities of scientists. Scientists are limited by their knowledge as well as by their abilities to directly or indirectly observe natural or experimental phenomenon related to matter.

Moreover, God is not physical matter. He is Supreme Consciousness and Supreme Bliss. God is perceived only by our soul instead of our senses. God will not be proven by experiments of physical science. Finally, we find God when we dedicate all our activities to the service of God and become selfless in our actions.

Mantra #5: God the Overwhelming and Unfathomable Power

*Yam smä prachhanti kuh sayti ghoram, utaymähurnaisho
asteetyanam,*

*So aryah pushtih vij eva aminäti, shradsmäi dhat sa janäsa
indrah.*

*Yam smä prachhanti kuh sayti ghoram, utaymähurnaisho
asteetyanam.*

About Whom people ask,

where is that
Overwhelming,
that Unfathomable
Power, God?

about Whom some say
He does not exist

So vij eva aminäti aryah pushtih, janäsa shradsmai dhat
 God, like an the wealth and Human have faith in
 earthquake vanity of wealthy beings, and devotion
 shakes up or destroys or vain persons, to God,

sa indrah.

He is Master of all riches, the Most Powerful One
 King of all kings and Universal Benefactor.

Many persons who doubt the existence of God, ask the question, “Where is God, where is that Overwhelming Unfathomable Power?” Such persons usually belong to one of the following two groups: Firstly, there are those who state that if God existed, there would be more justice in the world. Those doing good deeds would be happy and rejoicing and those doing bad deeds would be miserable and suffering, but the opposite is often true in real life. They add, if God’s justice prevailed, children would not be born with physical deformities or mental disabilities. Given these observations they believe that acquiring wealth and power, and being able to live a luxurious life should be the primary goals of life. Also, some of them state that God and religion are the opium of the masses to distract them from their material shortcomings in life. Secondly, there are those who have faith in modern science and see it as a solution to all types of world’s complex problems and unanswered questions. They believe that whatever you see around is a chance of nature, or the result of human effort and/or a ‘miracle’ of science and not divinely ordained. They attribute all of our differences to our genes, environmental factors and statistical chance. Many of them state that God died in the twentieth century and some of them even add that it is likely that all the vestiges of God may slowly disappear in the 21st century. The denial of God’s existence is not a new view, for Chärwäk and his followers in India approximately 3000 years ago (a few hundred years before Buddha and Mahavir Jain) said that there is no God. They wanted a visible proof of

God and lacking the same they stated God does not exist. Their motto was, 'Enjoy life and its physical pleasures even if you have to borrow money to indulge in them and forget about afterlife because it does not exist'.

Then, there are perhaps the majority of persons, who profess faith in God and they go through the religious rituals required by their faith. Most of them pay lip service to God and religion, however, do not critically look at their beliefs such as, "Who is God? Where is He? What does He do? What are His attributes? How do you truly reach Him? Whether their beliefs are based on blind faith or on common sense?" nor do they truly adopt virtue in life. They are content with or used to their life, and when problems arise in their lives, they want quick and easy solutions that require minimal effort and very little change in their manner of living. They often want a religious preacher to help solve their problems through a confession, completion of certain rituals, or a prayer service for their well-being that will win them a favor from God.

In reality, however, it is only a very small group of persons who truly believe in and are devoted to God at all times and live their life accordingly. In the Bhagavad Geeta master-yogi (Yogiraj) Krishna explains to Arjuna the same thing about soul by stating that among all the people in the world, there are only a few who are really interested in and pursue the spiritual aspects of life (Geeta 2: 29). Nevertheless, those who do pursue and lead a true spiritual life will find God, inner peace and ultimately attain bliss.

This mantra further elucidates that, God brings crisis in the lives of people and their best laid plans and dreams, like an earthquake, are completely shaken, transformed or destroyed. The material wealth, power and vanity of the apparently most powerful, can be reduced to dust in a flash. God the Overwhelming Power is not dead in the 21st century, God is eternal. Because,

God was never born, He never dies. God has destroyed great empires in the past and can do so in the future.

Thankful are the people who recognize God's jolt in their life and instead of lamenting recognize God's immense power. They finally learn that their abilities and power are limited, find humility, and straighten out their lives. Such jolts bring them closer to God.

Lastly, this mantra addresses God as *Indra*—the Master of all riches, the Most Powerful One, King of all kings, and the Universal Protector and Benefactor and reminds human beings to always remember Him as the Savior (also see pages 101–102). In God alone have true faith and devotion. Always remember that God is Omnipresent and Omniscient and that God watches all our actions and judges them. The initial progress on the path of faith in and devotion to God might seem a bit slow as it is often necessary to unlearn previously held wrong beliefs and doubts, but the journey is ultimately worth the effort. Do not become vane about human abilities or power, for they are infinitesimal compared to that of God and God is capable of destroying them in an instant. True devotees on the other hand experience increasing inner joy, peace and spiritual strength as God becomes their closest Companion and Benefactor.

Mantra #6: Dear God Inspire Us and Help Remove our Vices and Instill Nobleness

Vishwäni deva savitar duritäni parä suva. Yad bhadram tanna ä suva. (Rig Veda 5:82:5, Yajur Veda 30:3).

<i>Deva</i>	<i>savitar</i>	<i>parä suva</i>	<i>vishwäni</i>
God, Divine Supreme Giver	the One who inspires us, Creator of the Universe,	please help remove from us	all forms of
<i>duritäni.</i>	<i>Yad</i>	<i>bhadram</i>	<i>tanna ä suva.</i>
vices and sorrows,	and those	qualities which are noble	please help us acquire.

God in this mantra is addressed as Deva and Savita. The word *Deva* means one who gives for the welfare of others without asking something in return. God of course is the Supreme Giver, Giver of spiritual and material wealth and Giver to all givers, whereby, He is called Deva. In other contexts, the word deva is also used for persons who are most generous as well as for physical entities such as fire, air etc. (see page # 105 for details). The word *Savita* means God who inspires our soul and is Creator of the universe. The root for word Savita is *sav* which according to Monier William's Sanskrit-English dictionary means "One who sets in motion, impels, an instigator, a stimulator) and the word savita itself means "A stimulator, rouser, vivifier". This is why, God who inspires all of us as human beings and activates prakriti—primordial matter to create the manifest universe in the Vedas is called Savita. God as the inner voice to our soul is constantly inspiring us to follow the correct path and to do the right thing. The inner joy and inspiration that we feel when we do the right thing comes from God. When we follow the right path, despite pressures and temptations to do otherwise, we will hear God's voice (our inner voice) speak to us and inspire us. Also, when we think evil thoughts or plan to do something wrong (lying, stealing, hate etc.) God creates doubt, fear, shame or an aversion in us toward such thoughts and behavior advising us to change our course towards the right path. In this manner Savita i.e. God—the Supreme Being who resides inside every soul, is everybody's most intimate personal God, who looks after each and everyone's welfare and showers His Grace upon us all the time. Since, on the earth, the physical sun directly or indirectly provides the energy so that all the living things can live, our physical sun in Sanskrit is also called savita. This mantra has often been mistranslated as a prayer to sun or 'sun-god' called savita but as explained above and in more detail in explanation of the next mantra page # 43 and on page # 113 is actually a prayer to God and not to sun or 'sun-god'.

What do we ask God when we pray to Him? Do we ask God for the fulfillment of wishes that do not deserve to be or are unlikely to be fulfilled such as ‘God make me the king of the world’? Or, should we ask for prayers that are going to make us a better human being and take us closer to God? The mantra recommends that we first ask for God’s inspiration and help, so that we become more introspective to enable us to remove all vices and bad habits from our life. In the Vedic Dharma the cardinal sins (called *duritan* in this mantra) are lying (untruth), lust, morbid affection (blind attachment to others and material objects), greed, anger, envy and vanity. The very worst sins, however, are suicide and killing others (except in self-defense or in a morally justifiable war). Other vices include laziness, gambling and drinking or getting intoxicated. These various sins and vices can exist at the level of thought, word or deed. They are all considered to be self-destructive and a setback in life’s spiritual progress. The word *vishwani* is usually translated as all, however, its root word *vish* also means things that have settled and made a home in us (our mind) and are not going to be dislodged easily just by wishing them away. Our prayers then must not be empty rituals for the fulfillment of wishes, but in order to be successful require our active effort in removing vices from our daily lives. Whenever, there is the temptation to do something wrong or follow a vice, by analyzing or contemplating on them, as well as listening to the inner voice of God—Savita and finally refraining from the temptation, we will make gradual success in uprooting the vices. In this manner, as we remove the vices from our mind, we also gradually make room there for acquiring noble qualities such as truth, honesty, integrity, courage, wisdom, forgiveness, kindness, love etc. The last four words of the mantra are then a prayer to God for His Grace so that we may achieve success in acquiring what is genuinely noble and good for us.

Mantra #7: Creator God is the Giver and Sustainer of Life and Wisdom

Bhur bhuvah swah. Tatsavitur varaynyam bhargo devasya dheemahi.

Dhiyo yo nah prachodyät. (Yajur Veda 36: 3; Rig Veda 3: 63: 20 and Säm Veda 6: 3:10:1).¹

<i>Bhur</i> You are the Giver and Sustainer of all life,	<i>bhuvah</i> the Remover of all sorrows,	<i>swah.</i> the Bestower of bliss
<i>Tat savitur</i> God, who always inspires us, the Creator of the Universe	<i>varaynyam</i> You Alone are worthy of worship	<i>bhargo</i> You are the Supreme Radiance that illuminates us and removes our evil desires
<i>devasya</i> You are the Supreme Giver,	<i>dheemahi.</i> we meditate on Thee.	<i>yo</i> You who have all these qualities,
<i>prachodyät</i> Please inspire us, move forward	<i>nah</i> our	<i>dhiyo.</i> intellect so that we may be able to tell right from wrong and always follow the right path.

This mantra is called *Gayatri* (chant or sing) mantra because it's chanting or singing with devotion, reflection on its meaning, and adoption of the message in one's life leads to salvation, and attainment of God realization and bliss. This is the first and most common mantra from the Vedas learned by most Hindus. This mantra is included in three of the four Vedas. It is recited and chanted both as a daily prayer as well as on special occasions. The word Om, and this mantra are commonly used for silent

¹ In the Rig and Säm Veda, the first three words of this mantra are not included, but the rest is same.

chanting during yoga meditation. In this mantra God is described as the Supreme Being who gives us everything such as life, happiness and when we become deserving ultimately gives us bliss. In addition, He removes our sorrows. Do your best and then learn to live with what you have; if your needs truly exceed what you have, then pray to God only and do not go begging before others. God fulfills our worthwhile wishes in His unique ways, sometimes by fulfilling the wish and at other times by giving the wisdom to deal with our circumstances. Also, be generous and share what you have with those who are less fortunate.

Next the mantra states, God is Savita—the Creator of the whole universe and all living beings. God has also given us birth and resides inside our soul (Rig Veda 10: 82: 7, Yajur Veda 17: 31, Atharva Veda 10: 8: 13). As stated in the previous mantra God as the inner voice to our soul is constantly inspiring us to follow the correct path and to do the right thing. The inner joy and inspiration that we feel when we do the right thing comes from God. He is the Supreme Radiance—*Bharga* that illuminates our soul and mind and takes us away from sins. When we make effort to get close to God—the Supreme Radiance, we are enlightened and our evil desires burn away. When we think evil thoughts or plan to do something wrong (lying, stealing, hate etc.) God creates doubt, fear, shame or an aversion in us toward such thoughts and behavior advising us to change our course because as Savita, Bharga and Deva—the Supreme Giver and Well-wisher, He always steers us towards the right path. However, this does not imply that God behaves like human beings and becomes angry or unhappy because of human follies. God, as stated in the explanation of mantra # 2 (page # 32), is always Perfection and Supreme Bliss, who judges us based upon our karmas not because he favors one group of persons over the others in a prejudicial manner. The mantra goes on to elaborate that God—the Supreme Giver alone is worthy of worship and meditation, none else.

What should we be seeking in prayer and meditation; wisdom, wealth or something else? Vedas say that while wealth is important and that we should earn as much as we can (Rig Veda 10: 121: 10), but when praying it is far more important to ask for wisdom, because wealth without wisdom can lead to one's downfall. The word *dhee* refers to intellect with the power to discriminate and separate right from wrong, truth from falsehood, and propaganda from correct information. It also helps one understand moral responsibility and the need to act accordingly. Dhee is the intellect and wisdom that helps a person follow the path of virtue even when tempted to do otherwise.

Mantra #8: God is the Supreme Light that Guides Us to Follow the Truth

Agnay vratpatay vratam charishyāmi tat shakayam tanmay rādhyatām.

Idamaham anritāt satyam upaimi. (Yajur Veda 1: 5).

<i>Agnay</i> Our Ultimate Leader, Supreme Light that enlightens us,	<i>vratpatay</i> Judge and the Master Keeper of all vows,	<i>vratam</i> as I take a solemn vow,	
<i>charishyāmi</i> please bless me so that	<i>tat shakayam</i> I may fulfill my vow	<i>tanmay</i> and that my vow	<i>rādhyatām.</i> may be successful.
<i>Idam aham</i> with Thy blessing I now pledge	<i>anritāt</i> to reject all falsehood	<i>satyam upaimi.</i> and adhere to truth for the rest of my life.	

In this mantra God is addressed as *Agnay* (also spelled *Agne*) which means that God alone is the Supreme Light and the Ultimate Source of Enlightenment (also see pages # 98–100 for detailed discussion of *Agnay/Agne*). The word *Agnay* also means that it is God who takes us forward in the right path and as such

stands for our Ultimate Leader. It is to God alone that we must pray for guidance. When we find failure in our lives, when we are in darkness, we ask God to be the Light to guide us so that we do not follow the path of temptation. The New Testament also says: God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all (1John 1: 5).

The other attribute of God emphasized in this mantra is that God is the Master Keeper of vows because all creation abides by His universal rules and even He abides by the same rules. God will not break His rules to please His devotees or followers e.g. God will not make the sun rise in the west, perform miracles that defy rules of physical science, act prejudicially against those who are right and favor the wrong doers, or incarnate as a human being.

Truth is one of the main themes of the Vedas. They reiterate, it is truth that always ultimately prevails and God is called the Ultimate Truth (Rig Veda 1: 11: 1, 2: 1: 4, 4: 31: 2, Yajur Veda 36: 5). Truth is that value that transcends all other moral values. Truth is the foundation on which all human interaction is based. Even liars use the pretense of truth in their dealings with others. It is necessary to always be willing to accept that which is true and discard that which is not in every aspect of life. To be scrupulously honest may require giving up financial or personal security or social position. Discarding cherished beliefs may be necessary, and in the final analysis, sacrificing one's life too. This mantra reminds us of the fact that, in our daily lives, we often shortchange truth in many small (and sometimes big) ways. Also, many of us are more afraid of getting caught in a lie than actually lying. To overcome this tendency, this mantra is a pledge to always uphold the truth and to avoid falsehood in all aspects of our lives so that laziness, fears of security, or other shortcomings will not prevent us from keeping our vows. This mantra asks for God's blessings in fulfilling the pledge, "Dear God, give me Your blessings so that by Your Grace I may be successful in fulfilling my pledge to always follow the truth in thought, word and deed."

Mantra #9: Blissful God Bestows Us Spiritual and Physical Strength

Ya ätmadä baladä yasya vishvaupäsatay prashisham yasya deväh.

Yasya chhäyā amritam yasya mrityuh kasmai deväya havishä vidhayma. (Yajur Veda 25: 13)

<i>Ya</i>	<i>ätmadä</i>	<i>baladä</i>	<i>yasya vishvaupäsatay</i>
God is	Supreme Spirit	Supreme Power	Whom wise persons
the	who enlightens	who gives us	worship, pray and
	us and gives us	physical strength	meditate to,
	spiritual strength,		

<i>prashisham yasya deväh.</i>	<i>Yasya chhäyā amritam</i>
whose commands even the wise and the	God, whose shelter and protection
physical forces of the universe follow.	is bliss and immortality,

<i>yasya mrityuh</i>	<i>kasmai deväya</i>	<i>havishä vidhayma.</i>
lack of whose shelter	to that Blissful Master	we worship with selfless
is misery and death,	who gives us everything,	service self-sacrifice
		and surrender.

God in this mantra is described as the Supreme Spirit and Power who gives us both spiritual and physical strength, moves us away from miseries and eventually provides us with bliss and *moksha*—liberation of Soul and attainment of God realization (also see page # 7 for definition of ‘attaining God realization’). Most of us on the earth are so busy either trying to meet our daily needs or fulfilling sensory pleasures that we forget who we really are and what are our true goals in life. Are we just physical beings or are we our eternal souls temporarily housed in our physical bodies that will eventually wither away? This mantra says that God, the Supreme Spirit enlightens our soul and gives us spiritual strength to do what is right and avoid temptation. Similarly, God gives us physical strength and good health so that we can live a productive life and be helpful to our fellow beings. God by bestowing us with both spiritual and physical strength

inspires us to solve problems ourselves in our life journey, and not become dependent on others.

Next God is addressed as the Supreme Master whose commands are followed not only by all the wise persons but even the physical elements of the universe. As stated in the previous mantra the sun follows God's rules and rises in the east and sets in the west. Since time immemorial all truly wise persons have worshipped, prayed to and meditated to God and not other entities. Less wise persons on the other hand pray and worship a variety of entities such as God's alleged incarnations, icons or *moortis*.

In the second line, the mantra states God's shelter and protection makes a person acquire equanimity, joy, love, peace and bliss in life where as the lack of God's shelter results in misery and eventually unhappy death instead of a death that leads to the liberation of the soul and bliss. Therefore, to seek God who is the Master of Bliss and who gives us everything, we worship God by offering ourselves to Him i.e. surrender to Him. Our deeds are undertaken in His service by the dedication of all our actions in a selfless manner to the service of God without any desire whatsoever for any kind of return or personal gratification.

Mantra # 10: God is the Supreme Power that Can Help Us Acquire Supreme Qualities

Tayjo asi tayjo mayi dayhi, viryam asi veeryam mayi dayhi.

Balam asi balam mayi dayhi, ojo asi ojo mayi dayhi.

Manyur asi manyur mayi dayhi, saho asi saho mayi dayhi.

(Yajur Veda 19: 9)

<i>Tayjo asi</i>	<i>tayjo mayi dayhi,</i>	<i>veeryam asi</i>	<i>viryam mayi dayhi.</i>
God, You are	fill me with	You are	fill me with vigor,
Supreme	radiance, help	Infinite	help make
Radiance,	make me radiant,	Vigor,	me valiant,

<i>Balam asi</i>	<i>balam mayi dayhi,</i>	<i>ojo asi</i>	<i>ojo mayi dayhi.</i>
You are Almighty,	give me also strength,	You are	endow me with
Infinite Strength,	help me acquire	Infinite	vitality,
	strength,	Vitality,	

<i>Manyur asi</i>	<i>manyur mayi dayhi,</i>	<i>saho asi</i>	<i>saho mayi dayhi.</i>
You are Supreme	give me courage to fight	You are	fill me with
Mettle ¹ against	what is wrong or unjust,	Infinite	fortitude, courage
wrong,		Fortitude,	and endurance.

This manta describes six of God's attributes and is a prayer to God to help us acquire at least elements of some of the same attributes in our lives. The mantra starts by stating that God is the Radiance that enlightens everybody because He is the Source of all knowledge that is known by truth. This is why in many mantras in the Vedas, God is also called *Agni*—the Supreme Light that leads us forward in our life, towards brightness and away from ignorance and darkness (also see pages # 98–100). After acknowledging that God is the Supreme Radiance, we pray for radiance in our own lives also. Similarly in this mantra, God is addressed as the Almighty and the storehouse of Infinite Strength, Vigor and Vitality, Mettle and Fortitude followed by prayer that we may also acquire an element of the same attributes in our lives. As stated earlier on page # 42, when we pray to God, or ask God for something, it is not a passive request. When we ask for God's grace and also make an active commitment to change our life, we become deserving of God's gifts. Giving is God's attribute and He gives all of us what we deserve based upon our karma. When we pray, our actions should not contradict our prayers. A person praying for good health is not expected to eat six doughnuts and/or drink six beers daily. Moreover, if we ask God to give us something (i.e. share with

¹ Manyur is often translated as God's wrath or anger towards wrong doers, but as stated earlier on page #33, God is Perfection and does not get angry or vengeful like human beings. God, however, does punish wrong doers; this ability of God is Manyur. If Manyur is to be translated as 'Wrath against wrong doers,' then it must be kept in mind that it is not emotional anger or vengefulness. The Sanskrit word for anger is *krodha*, not manyur.

us), then we must become willing to share what we have with the less fortunate. Lastly, as acknowledged in this mantra, God is the Foremost Power and we should only ask Him when we need something. We should, therefore, not seek protection or shelter from those who seem to be powerful but are actually quite vulnerable themselves. Such shelter or protection from other humans, in the long haul is doomed to failure. Therefore, one must first and foremost ask God, the Giver of all givers with humility and generosity. An advanced aspirant who has completely surrendered to God does not ask anything for himself or herself but only for the welfare of others. Such aspirants leave the responsibility of their welfare, shelter and protection to God and trust that God will meet their needs one way or the other.

Mantra # 11: God is our Father, Mother and Ultimate Shelter

Tvam hi nah pitä vaso tvam mätä shatkrato babhoovith.

Adhä tay sumanmimahay. (Rig Veda 8: 98: 11).

<i>Tvam hi</i>	<i>nah</i>	<i>pitä</i>	<i>tvam</i>	<i>mätä</i>	<i>vaso</i>
God, You are	our,	Father and	You are	our Mother,	You are
	everybody's,				everybody's
					home and shelter,

<i>shatkrato babhoovith.</i>	<i>Adhä</i>	<i>tay sumanm imahay</i>
God, You have hundreds of	Therefore,	we deeply revere You
Attributes, Capabilities		and honor and meditate
and Works.		on You.

In this mantra God is called both our Father and Mother. Most religions that believe in God, often call Him as our Father, however, Vedas are unique¹ in calling God also as our Mother. Although, in the Vedas God has been called our Father in many

¹ The only place in the Abrahamic faith where God is also addressed as a Mother (in addition to Father) is in the Gospel of Truth, but this view is quite different from that in the canonical four Gospels of the New Testament which address God only as Father.

more places than Mother and in Sanskrit grammar God is usually addressed in the male gender, nevertheless in the Vedas God is called Mother in other mantras also (Rig 6: 1: 5). Does this make God male or female like our parents? The answer is obviously no, because God has no physical body (see above pages 29–31). This description of God as father or mother is only symbolic; just as children can have access to their mother and father for help and advice, God is always there to guide us. God resides inside our soul and is the Supreme Consciousness, Radiance that enlightens us and He is the Supreme Bliss that brings bliss in our lives. Also, this description of God as Mother or Father in the Vedas has nothing to do with ‘*Mata Ka Darshan*’, the worship practice of a large number of Hindus, where they pray to a *moorti*—icon or a large picture of devi (goddess) Durga as *mata* as their protector and benefactor (also see page #112).

Next, this mantra addresses God as *Vaso* which means He is the abode or home for everybody in the universe; good people, bad people and those who are a mixture of both good and bad. He does not expel anybody from the universe because this would be against His universal rules. Moreover, He is a Loving God, who while justly punishes sinners, also constantly provides them with new opportunities to reform themselves. He is the Final Shelter of everybody.

Next, God is addressed as *Shatkrato* which means somebody who can do hundreds of tasks simultaneously. God’s abilities are endless and can not be described by words alone. God sustains the whole universe, including its creation, maintenance and dissolution. He provides air, water and food for all creatures. God gives appropriate awards to all persons based upon their deeds. As inner voice to the soul He constantly inspires us when we do something good, and warns us when we do something wrong. These are a few of the hundreds of tasks God performs.

The mantra ends by stating, it is You, God we deeply revere,

honor and pray to and not any body else. It is You, God to whom we meditate for your grace, love and bliss because you are everybody's shelter. Just as children can have access to their mother and father for help and advice, You God are the Supreme Father and Mother, and we, Your children can always reach You. All we need do is look inside our soul and we will find You.

Mantra #12: God is All Knowing, All Seeing, and is Present Everywhere

Sahasrasheershä purushah sahasaräkshah sahasrapät.

Sa bhumim vishvato vratvä atyatishtat dashängulam. (Rig Veda 10: 90: 1,)

Purushah

Universal
Being, God

Sahasra sheershä

is all knowing, Source of true knowledge,
symbolically has knowledge like a
person with infinite number of heads

sahasaräkshah

is all seeing,
omniscient
like a person with
infinite eyes

sahasrapät.

is present everywhere,
omnipresent as if
He has infinite number of legs.

Sa

He, God

vishvato vratvä

envelops from
all directions

bhumim

earth, planets
and stars,

dashängulam atyatishtat.

God also transcends the universe
because He exceeds everything.

In this famous mantra from *Purusha Sukta*¹ of Rig Veda, God is described as the Universal Being or Supreme Person who is all knowing, all seeing and is present everywhere. The mantra further states that God envelops the minutest particles to the largest components of the universe. The word *sahasra* in Sanskrit means thousand but in Veda mantras is also used for infinite.

¹ The word Sukta in Vedas means a collection of mantras that all have a related theme like a hymn.

This mantra has used the symbolism of a thousand or infinite-headed person, to describe that God is omniscient, all knowing and the source of all true knowledge. Similarly the mantra uses the symbolism of infinite-footed and infinite-eyed person, to describe that God is omnipresent and omniscient who is present everywhere and sees everything which happens in the universe including everything that goes on even inside our mind—He is the Ultimate Seer. None of our karmas are hidden from the omnipresent and all seeing God. This mantra uses symbolism and does not describe a monstrous deity which has thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of feet. Another mantra from Yajur Veda (17: 19) in a similar fashion describes that God has eyes, face, arms and legs in every direction, implying that God is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and God does not need others' help to perform His tasks whether those be deities, winged angels or alleged incarnations.

The second line of the mantra describes that omnipresent God envelops everything in the universe including the earth, planets, stars and galaxies. The symbolism used here is that whatever the measurements of any item in the universe, God exceeds it by 10 finger-breadths, implying that God transcends all physical objects. He is endless and extends beyond the manifest universe. Words can not adequately describe God in full and He can only be experienced by the soul and not our senses. This mantra is also included in Shvetāshvatara Upanishad (3: 14). Lest there be any doubt about the symbolic description of God in this mantra, the 19th mantra in the same chapter of the Upanishad (3: 19) describes God as having no hands or feet yet He can hold and grasp everything and that He is swifter than everything. God sees without eyes and hears without ears. He knows everything but no one can fully know Him. The wise call Him the Foremost Supreme Person.

Mantra # 13: Creator God can not be represented by an Image or an Icon/Idol

Na tasya pratimā asti yasya nama mahad yashah.

Hiranyagarbhā ityēsha mā mā hinseet ityēshā yasmāt na jātāh ityēshah. (Yajur Veda 32: 3)

<i>Na tasya pratimā asti</i> God can not be represented by an image or icon for God has no physical image, shape or form,	<i>yasya nama mahad yashah.</i> His name is the Greatest Glory, i.e. knowing Him is Greatest Glory.
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<i>Hiranyagarbhā</i> <i>ityēsha</i> God is the Creator of the universe in this form I know praise and seek You,	<i>yasmāt na jātāh</i> <i>ityēshā</i> God You are never born, in this form I praise and seek You,	<i>mā mā</i> <i>hinseet ityēshah</i> may You always protect me and may I never get hurt, in this form I know, praise and seek You.
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This Veda mantra clearly states that God has no physical image, shape or form, so it is not possible to make an image of God in a painting, icon, idol or a statue. Also, one can not represent Him as an earthborn deity or as a human being. As stated earlier (pages # 29–31), God is not made of flesh and does not exist in any anthropomorphic form; at best He can only symbolically be described in such form. The mantra in the second line further states that God was never born. Therefore, the Vedas disagree with the concept of God being incarnated in the human form. Although, all Hindus acknowledge that the Vedas are their root scriptures, in practice most Hindus often ignore its teachings and instead believe in *Purānas* which contain many miraculous stories of various deities and ancient Indian kings as well as some distorted Vedic messages (see page # xii). This may explain why most Hindus believe that God was born as Rama and

later as Krishna and consider Rama and Krishna as God, just the way Christians believe that Jesus is God.

Moreover, this mantra promotes direct prayer to God and indirectly discourages the practice of icon/idol worship in any form. Vedanta Darshana (4: 1: 4) also states *Na Prateekay na he sah* (an idol does not represent God—and one should not meditate on it). Contrary to the teachings of the Vedas, however, a large number of Hindus pray and worship before *moortis*—icons of various deities of God, *devas*—gods and goddesses. Most Hindus who pray before the deities consider them to be symbolic representations of the many facets of the One Almighty God or the ways to reach Him, but this is an incorrect practice as per the Vedas. This practice of Hindus, however, is not very different from that of Christians especially Catholics who pray before statues or icons of Christ, Mary and the various Christian saints. Hindus praying to various *devas* or Christians praying to saints are often trying to please a favorite deva (*isht-deva*) or saint respectively by an offering, saying a prayer or doing a small penance. By such acts, they have the hope that one may be able to barter for forgiveness and also ask for fulfillment of some or all desires without necessarily having to make a real change in personal life. If one needs help or assistance, why not pray to God and ask God directly, for He is always with us as our Benefactor and Protector, rather than asking intermediaries. God has not died, only His alleged incarnations, *devas* or saints died a long time ago. The so called intermediaries were never superior to God nor will they ever be and are not necessary as go-between brokers to God. Giving is God's job, but He only gives to the deserving based upon our karma (even without asking) and not because of our indirect bribe to Him by making an offering to the icon or the idol. Bribe is a deception and a sin. For good rewards God demands virtue and real penitence with a change in the conduct of one's life, instead of superficial gestures.

The prayer rituals for many Hindus consist of one or more of the following: going to the temple, prostrating before the moorti—icon of the deity, saying a prayer, meditating, lighting an earthen oil lamp, making an offering of money or sweets, singing devotional songs, listening to a sermon, receiving *Prasād* (holy food) from the priest, and perhaps ringing the prayer bell. In my observations, Catholic Christians practice similar rituals by respectfully bowing or making a symbolic cross on their chest before a statue or picture of Christ or Mary (or other saints), singing devotional songs, listening to a sermon, reading the bible, sometimes lighting a votive candle and receiving a communion with consecration of bread. While the ritual of making an offering and/or lighting an oil lamp or candle before the *moortis* or icon of deities or saints may confirm the believer's faith in his/her religion and may remind one of God, does God who lights the whole universe (and enlightens our souls) need the light from an oil lamp or a candle to illuminate Him? Does God, who feeds and provides for the whole world, need our offerings? The *moortis*—idols, icons or statues are made of stone, clay, wood or metal and are incapable of hearing or seeing anything, or delivering anything in return. In response to this statement, my Hindu friends who pray before a *moorti*—icon/idol (to them symbolic of God or His Powers) tell me that they are aware that the *moorti* (idol) is made of stone or clay but the moorti is sanctified by the priests and they are praying to the Omnipresent God present in the idol and not the clay idol. The moorti helps them focus on God rather than directly meditating on a formless God and bowing before the moorti shows their humility. When and how did the priests acquire the ability to turn an inert moorti made of stone or clay into a holy entity and more worthy of worship than Omnipresent and Omniscient God? As discussed below in detail in mantra # 16 (page # 62), one will not find or attain God outside one's own body in the *moortis*—idols, going

to a temple, church or a mosque, but instead would find God inside one's body in the soul. The moorti—icon/idol, a statue or a picture of a Hindu deity, Christ, or a Christian saint is a human creation and not God's creation. When one meditates in front of the moorti, a statue or a picture, one may see a beautiful and/or a serene looking creation of an artist, but at the same time it also glaringly shows its limitations in representing the Infinite God. In addition, priests to attract more donations to their temples or churches often attribute ridiculous “magical” powers to the *moortis* or icons e.g. *moortis* drinking milk in India (or icons shedding tears in the West) whereby fooling the gullible public into miracles and incredible beliefs. If one needed visible symbols of Infinite God, it would be far better to find them in God's creations, such as the universe, the sun, the moon, the majestic snow-capped mountains and the vast ocean and perhaps are better reminders of God and more worthy of worship than man's creations—the *moortis*, icons, statues of deities or saints.

True worship of God is not a ritualistic prayer, repeating God's name over and over, or making an offering in a house of worship, but an opportunity to contemplate on the meaning of the recited name of God and the attribute(s) it represents. Further, after one knows and understands the attribute of God, the recited name reflects, then, true worship means incorporating at least a small element of the attribute into the fabric of one's life. As God is Benevolent, be benevolent and helpful to others in your life. As God is Just, be just in your life. As God is the Ultimate Truth, be truthful and honest in your life. Also, worship can mean incorporating life practices that do not pollute God's creations such as the earth or hurt other creatures.

Therefore, as stated above, it is a good policy to avoid worship before a moorti, an idol or an icon since God desires neither money nor gifts. The only thing God expects from human beings, who are desirous of getting close to Him, is that they live virtuously,

be generous and be of service to their fellow humans. One must remember that no body becomes learned by the company of an inert moorti or an icon. One acquires wisdom by learning from and interacting with the spiritually wise and learned persons as well as meditating upon Omnipresent and Omniscient God. Moreover, if a moorti or an icon is the only thing that reminds one of God, a person is more likely to commit sinful acts in daily life when others are not watching because in the others' absence, the person is likely to forget God's Omnipresence.

If despite all what has been said above in the explanation of this mantra, a person finds that prayer before a moorti or an icon in a Hindu temple or Christian church, or circling Kaaba in Mecca is one of the most important things in his/her life and it alone makes him/her a better person, then this is a personal choice.

The second line of the mantra calls God *Hiranyagarbha*, the word means God the Creator of luminous stars, galaxies and the universe (also see page # 119). The literal meaning of word Hiranyagarbha in colloquial Sanskrit is the womb of luminous or shining things. In context of God, at the physical level it means the Creator who makes shining stars and galaxies from the primordial physical matter called Prakriti into the manifest universe for the benefit of living beings. (Also see pages # 9–15.) At the spiritual level, Hiranyagarbha means God, the Source of all true knowledge that enlightens our mind and soul. Worship of God, in this mantra named as Hiranyagarbha, would mean, 'Like God, we do something for the benefit of others in an unselfish manner?'

The mantra, in addition states, God, You are the Most Glorious and Important Entity in the universe. Your name is the most important name. Making effort to know You is the most glorious thing any human being can do. Dear God, I know You as the Creator of the Universe who is never born, has no shape or form and can never be represented by an image nor an idol.

God, it is You whom I praise and seek with all my abilities, by following Your path of truth, love, peace and justice, as well as through meditation. May God, Your grace be always upon me and may You always illuminate my mind and soul so that I do not get distracted from my path and get hurt in life's journey towards attaining You.

Mantra #14: God is the Ultimate Protector, Savior and Giver of Wisdom & Prosperity

Tameeshānam jagatastasthushaspatim dhiyamjinvamavasay hoomahay vayam.

Pooshā no yathā vedasāmasadvrdhay rakshitā pāyuradabdhah svastayay. (Rig 1: 89: 5)

<i>Tam eeshānam</i>	<i>jagatastasthushaspatim</i>	<i>dhiyamjinvam</i>
He is the Master and Creator, as well as	Maintainer and Sustainer of both the moving and stationary things,	Bestower and Inspirer of our intellect
<i>avasay hoomahay vayam.</i>	<i>Yathā</i>	<i>pooshā no</i>
we pray to You for our protection.	So that	God, who is our Nurturer, Nourisher,
<i>vedasāmasad vrdhay</i>	<i>pāyur adabdhah</i>	<i>svastayay.</i>
may advance our learning,	may the Supreme ever be our Savior in all respects and be,	benevolent to us, look after our well being.

The mantra is a prayer to God who is addressed as the Supreme Master, Creator and Maintainer of the whole universe, as well as our Ultimate Protector, Nurturer, Sustainer, Savior and Inspirer of our intellect. The devotee is asking for learning and wisdom that helps one differentiate right from wrong and for God's Benevolence for the well being of everybody.

The meaning of the word *Eesha* is God who is the Master of the entire spiritual and the physical wealth in the universe

(also see page # 10). All wealth belongs ultimately to God. God is the Universal Benefactor. Only God can fulfill both our physical and spiritual needs. We need only ask God and no one else for blessings. To emphasize the words entire universe, God is described as the Creator, Maintainer and Sustainer of the ever moving and ever changing universe as well as whatever appears to be immovable or stationary in it. Next, God is addressed as the Bestower and Inspirer of our intellect. As stated in the previous mantras, God is the Source of Infinite Knowledge who can give us wisdom which enables us to differentiate right from wrong as well as truth from lies and propaganda.

The second line of the mantra addresses God as the Ultimate Protector, Nurturer and Nourisher of the Universe. God is also called the Savior as well as the Benevolent One who loves everybody. He is the Supreme Power that nobody can defeat or suppress. The devotee after becoming humble asks God to enhance his/her wisdom to do the right thing. In addition, he/she asks for *svasti*—blessings for the wellbeing of everybody, not his/her alone.

Mantra #15: God is Imperishable and Eternal: God is Known by the Soul and Not Books

Richo aksharay parmay vayoman yasmin devä adhi vishway nishayduh.

Ya tam na veda kimrichä karishyati ya it tat vidu tay emay samasatay. (Rig Veda 1: 164: 39)

<i>Richo</i>	<i>aksharay</i>	<i>parmay</i>	<i>vayoman</i>
The focus of Vedas is, i.e.Vedas point to that	imperishable Eternal God	who alone is Supreme and	Omnipresent,
<i>vishway devä</i>	<i>adhi nishayduh</i>	<i>yasmin.</i>	<i>Ya tam na veda</i>
all of the universe's physical objects & forces	reside in and are sustained by	Him alone. A person who does not	know God, for him/her

kimrichä karishyati ya tat vidu tay it emay samasatay.
 what good will scriptures do! on the other hand they alone can get close to
 book knowledge alone those who know God God and find bliss.
 is insufficient,

The words *richä* or *richo* mean Veda mantras. This mantra states that the main focus of Vedas is God who is also called *akshara* because He is Indivisible and Imperishable i.e. God is the Eternal Unchangeable Ultimate Reality. God does not change or evolve to suit the needs of founders and followers of various religions. The mantra further states that God alone is the Supreme Master and is Omnipresent. The whole universe including all the physical objects and forces e.g. stars and galaxies (in Vedas at places are called devas, see page # 105) reside in the omnipresent God and He sustains the whole universe. He is the Supreme Consciousness behind the matrix of all matter. Because God is *akshara*—indivisible and is present everywhere, He will not and does not incarnate because that will require a fraction of Him being born in a human body which is against His attributes. God does not become a ‘Triune’ as believed in Christianity or become ‘Triune on multiple occasions’ as believed by many in the Hindu religion (also see pages 133–135 for discussion of Advait Vedanta).

The second half of the mantra, uses a figure of speech ‘what good will scriptures do!’ to emphasize to the reader or the listener that, God is not known by mere book knowledge of Vedas (even though God is the main focus of Vedas) because God is beyond words alone. The philosophical pursuits of Vedas are not empty exercises of memory and knowledge. The most important reason for the mistranslation of the Vedas by most Western scholars as well as some Indian scholars is the lack of recognition (as stated in this mantra) that the main focus of the Vedas is One God, who is eternal, formless, indivisible and who is the Source of true knowledge and bliss. In the Western countries many encyclopedias and other books on the

Hindu Religion have described Vedas as books of rituals and magic formulas and of secondary importance compared to the Upanishads. Nevertheless, disassociating One God from the Vedas will be like disassociating Rama from Ramayana, Krishna from Geeta, Christ from the New Testament and Muhammad from the Quran respectively. The words of Vedas at best can only describe attributes of God but can not make one closer to God until one incorporates the message of the mantra into the fabric of one's life. Book or factual knowledge of God through Vedas becomes worthwhile, only when a person actually lives a virtuous life, meditates and experiences God in one's life. God is known by the soul and not the senses (physical body or the mind). The mantra ends by stating, those, whose soul knows God, find real bliss and peace.

Mantra #16: God is the Supreme Being, One May Realize God by Yoga and Meditation

Yunjatay manah ut yunjatay dhiyo viprä viprasya brahato vipashyachitah.

Vi hoträ dadhay vayunavid eka it mahi devasya savituh parishtutih. (Rig Veda 5: 81: 1)

Human beings listen, and then act accordingly.

<i>Viprä</i>	<i>yunjatay</i>	<i>manah</i>	<i>ut</i>	<i>yunjatay</i>	<i>dhiyo</i>
Sages,	join their	mind	and	join their	intellect with
wise persons					

<i>brahat viprasya</i>	<i>Vi hoträ</i>	<i>eka it</i>	<i>vayunavid</i>
<i>vipashyachitah.</i>	<i>dadhay</i>		
Supreme Sage	Sages perform	that One's	who knows
i.e. God, who is the	their selfless	(i.e. God's)	karma (deeds)
Source of all true knowledge.	deeds in	service	of every person.

	<i>savituh</i>	<i>devasaya</i>	<i>mahi parishtutih.</i>
He is the	Creator God,	Supreme Divine Being	whose greatness and
	who inspires us,		praiseworthiness is
			endless.

The message of this mantra is for all human beings desirous of attaining God realization and bliss. Who am I? Am I my soul, my mind, or my intellect? According to Vedic scriptures, I am my imperishable soul that interacts with the environment through the mind via sense and action organs guided by the intellect (also see pages # 4–8). The mind and intellect, however, through the practice of yoga can also be directed inwards towards the soul and God. This mantra states that sages, wise persons and those desirous of bliss join their soul including the mind, and intellect with the Supreme Sage God so that the mind becomes tranquil and the person becomes blissful and enlightened with spiritual knowledge directly from God, the Source of all true knowledge. This conscious joining of the soul with Supreme Consciousness i.e. God is true yoga, everything else promoted as yoga both in India and the West is misdirected. One may argue that because God resides inside the soul, the two are already united—then why the need of yoga (meditation)? Vedic scriptures consider three types of separation between two entities. The first is that of physical distance: one person is in the United States and the other in India, however, this separation does not apply to the soul and God. The next separation relates to time: President Abraham Lincoln lived about 150 years ago we are alive today, however, this separation also does not apply to the soul and God. The separation of the soul and God is that of awareness on the part of the soul. It is only during deep meditation when all of the mind’s external activities are suspended, and the mind is fully focused inwards, the soul consciously perceives and joins God—this is true yoga. As stated previously on page # 7, the soul becomes one to One with God in a state of bliss, but the soul

does not merge with God nor becomes God and always remains a separate entity (also see pages # 157–159). Sages and wise persons have been doing this since time immemorial. Therefore, are we ready to initiate and make a similar effort?

This mantra emphasizes that joining both the mind and the intellect to God is important. Why? This is so, because the mind is prone to all kinds of flights of imaginations and ideas as well as prone to blind faith and belief in all kinds of miracles promoted in the name of religion. Such blind faith in religion, however, often takes people astray and away from the truth, unless one also exercises wisdom (*dhiya*—intellect) and common sense to differentiate right from wrong as well as what is plausible and what is unbelievable (also see pages # 176–181). The politically correct thing regarding religion, in many circles these days, is not to critically look at any body's beliefs regarding God, especially one's own religion. However, until one starts to combine wisdom and common sense with faith and devotion, one is very likely to be misdirected in one's journey towards God.

In the second line, this mantra re-emphasizes there is only One God who may be called by different names but nevertheless remains One Alone (also see pages # 23–27). He is Savita—the Creator of the universe and who as the inner voice of the soul, inspires us to follow the right path (also see pages # 41, 44, 113). He alone is the Supreme Divine Being who alone knows the karma (deeds) of every person and appropriately judges and rewards them. His greatness and praiseworthiness is endless, words are inadequate to describe it all. Sages (yogis) completely surrender themselves to God and do all their deeds in His service in a selfless manner. They do not get attached to money or material wealth but share it with others in a generous manner. This is the path to attain God and bliss, the aim of *upāsana*—meditation or true yoga.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF SOME ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Some of the attributes of God, such as Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Ultimate Judge, Kind and Merciful, described above in the sixteen mantras are discussed in greater detail below because there is difference of opinion among various scholars and different religions regarding their deeper meaning. The reader would find that the description of God's attributes in the Vedas and Upanishads are in many ways markedly different than those described in Abrahamic faiths as well as in the later Hindu scriptures e.g. *Purānas* the basis of many current Hindu beliefs and practices.

OMNIPRESENT

Most religions which believe in God, state that God is omnipresent, i.e. God is present everywhere in the vast universe. This, however, is not a mere philosophical concept. According to the Vedic scriptures, when one truly believes that God is present throughout the universe, both within you (inside the soul) and outside you, then one finds God as one's closest companion—*mitra* (also see page # 111). He/she does not have to go to a temple, church, mosque, synagogue, shrine, or a sacred place to find God. She/he finds God in everyplace in the universe and whatever place reminds her/him of God becomes holy. Such a person's mind then becomes a *mandir*—a temple. Also, she/he realizes that one does not need an intermediary such as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad or others to reach God because one can directly access God within oneself. He/she then starts to hear God as the inner voice to the soul finding an inspiration when one does something right and good and a warning when one does something wrong. Such a person feels God's constant

companionship and protection as the Universal Protector and Universal Benefactor, and realizing that she/he becomes fearless in the pursuit of truth.

Moreover, when we realize that God is omnipresent and watches over all our actions (karma) and judges them, we become willing to try our best to do the right thing and to resist temptation and avoid what is wrong (sin). Most humans are far more afraid of being caught committing a sin than actually performing the sin. When people do something wrong purposely, they usually want to ensure that there is no witness to their bad deed, which may result in them being caught. But when someone realizes that even if one could hide from other persons or electronic monitors, he/she cannot hide from God, therefore, the only reasonable course is not to carry out any bad deed.

In India, the following two parables are often told to illustrate the omnipresence of God.

There was once a powerful Indian monarch who said to his spiritual advisor, “You always talk about the power and the glory of God, but is there any power I have that exceeds that of God?” The counselor replied, “Of course, you have one power that exceeds that of God.” The monarch then said, “I do! Tell me what that power is.” The advisor replied, “Sir, you can banish any one of your subjects from your kingdom. This is something that God cannot do. He cannot banish a single subject from His kingdom!” The monarch was embarrassed and said, “That will do. I get your point.”

There was once a Guru who taught many students in his Gurukul—hermitage school (i.e. a monastery). One day he gave to each one of his pupils a mango, and told them to eat it at a place where nobody was watching them. Some students locked themselves inside their room where nobody else was watching them and ate the mangoes. Others hid in the thickets of bushes and trees surrounding the Gurukul and ate the mangoes. One

lonely student, however, came back to the teacher and returned the mango and stated, “Sir, I could not find any place where at least God was not watching me.” The Guru was delighted with the student and hugged him while stating, “Dear son you alone have been listening and learning what I have been teaching, others are only hearing. May God bless you and protect you.”

God in Christianity and Islam as well as in the Hindu religion (as practiced by most Hindus), is believed to live in heaven¹ and rule from there. If God lives in the physical place called heaven, where in the universe is that physical place exactly located—in (or near) which star or galaxy? (Also see pages # 133, 135–138 for discussion of heaven.) Is God not present in all other places of the universe that are not heaven? Does it also mean that God does not exist in the physical place called hell? If He does not exist everywhere in the universe including hell, can He truly be Omnipresent? God can not be simultaneously Omnipresent as well as be stationed as an anthropomorphic entity only in one place called heaven? Some persons to provoke as well as to clarify God’s omnipresence have asked the question, “Does God exist in muck?” The answer is yes, but God is not a physical object, He is Supreme Consciousness (also see page # 30), hence, God is untouched by muck. God in these situations has been symbolically compared to a beautiful lotus flower growing out of muck, yet not dirtied by the muck.

People who doubt the existence of God often ask, if God exists everywhere why we do not see or feel Him. Leaving God aside for the moment, even in the physical world, everyday subatomic particles (e.g. solar wind) pass through our body without in any

¹ In the Vedic Dharma there is no physical heaven or hell. Heaven is the state of soul being close to God in the state of bliss and being consciously aware of the same. Hell on the other hand is a state of deep ignorance where the soul has no free will and is covered by deep darkness living in lower life forms. The soul in the latter is living in the state of *bhoga*—a bondage state bearing the results of previous bad deeds and is unable to perform new karma because it has no free will (also see pages # 4–8)

way being altered by our body or us being aware of their passage (also see pages # 34–37). Therefore, God can clearly exist in us without our realizing Him. Just the way solar wind subatomic particles can be sensed scientifically, similarly, even though God can not be seen by our eyes yet He can be perceived by the soul. The whole purpose of yoga (meditation) is to become consciously aware of God and for the soul to be eventually one to One with God (also see pages # 62–64).

OMNISCIENT

God is Omniscient. God knows everything that goes on in the universe. He also knows all our karmas (actions), and as stated above being Omnipresent He even knows what goes on in our mind and soul. God is also, the Root Source of all knowledge that is based upon truth—the eternal laws. God is considered the Supreme Light that illuminates our mind. (Also see pages 45–46 and 98–100 under Agni for details.) In the state of Samadhi (the final stage of yoga where God is revealed to the soul) the soul can directly acquire knowledge from God. True spiritual knowledge acquired from God is not a rote philosophical discussion but a direct experience of the true reality (also see pages 157–158).

God, however, does not have prior knowledge of what new actions we as human beings will perform, because otherwise the soul would neither have a free will nor be responsible for its actions. If our destiny is totally predetermined and everything that happens in life is ‘God’s will’, then God and not us who would be responsible for our bad actions. Belief in predestination is shirking personal responsibility and blaming God when we encounter failure in our lives. Also, belief in predestination is a mark of laziness and inaction in life. Therefore, the Vedic Dharma disagrees with the concept that everything we do is predestined, although many Hindus believe in predestination just the way many

Muslims say about an unplanned event in life as ‘Allah’s Will’.

It is certainly true that we usually choose to do things in life that are based on our past experiences, the results of our past karmas. For instance, a person who has always helped others is far more likely to do so again when a new opportunity presents itself. Someone else, who has been exploitative and selfish all his life, will be far less willing to lend a hand to someone in need. Free will, however, allows everyone the option of changing the nature of the deeds. They can go from bad in the past to good in the present or future or in the opposite direction, from good to bad—situations where greed or pride rules may cause a person to fall from virtue. The corruption of a previously honest policeman by greed may serve as an example. However, such response is not predestined, nor our future etched in stone, for every moment is a new moment in God’s creation—the universe, and our free will gives us an opportunity to better ourselves, but with neglect, there is always a potential to slide backwards.

Most Hindus, like most people belonging to Abrahamic faiths believe that God knows the past, present and the future. According to Vedic scriptures, however, because God is Eternal and transcends time, for God truly there is no distinction of past, present or future, He always exists in the present. This division of time into past, present or future is for us humans and it also exists in the context of the physical universe. God knows our present and past deeds, and this forms the basis of the current good or bad fruits (*bhoga* see page # 6 and 75–76) of our previous karma. Also, God knows what will happen in the future in the physical universe because it operates under His universal rules of creation. However, as stated above, God does not exactly know what an individual person (soul) would do in the future. Therefore, astrologers, fortune and destiny tellers, and religious leaders who claim to know the future or destiny of other people are frauds. If God does not know what we as free

souls would do in the future and what our exact destiny will be, then how on the earth can an astrologer or a religious leader do the same. One should have a healthy degree of skepticism and exercise caution about prophecies and the heavenly rewards promised by leaders of various faiths. This should especially be so, when such leaders promise to their respective followers, heaven and its eternal pleasures based on the performance of certain rituals, donations and even martyrdom in the cause of the faith. Similarly, many televangelists exploit people's faith in God, by soliciting donations in exchange for their promise on God's behalf of a multifold reward. It is true that our personal knowledge is limited and we do not fully understand God's ways of doing things, however, this does not imply that we should give up our common sense or blindly follow the teachings of religious leaders or the scriptures. The following parable is often told in India to illustrate why one should shun prophecies, fortune telling or blind belief in destiny:

Once upon a time in India, there lived a powerful king who ably ruled his kingdom. He was about 37 years old and had two sons 8 and 5 years old. Unfortunately, he believed in astrology and fortune telling and would not do anything important in his kingdom until the priest told him it was an auspicious time for the proposed action.

One day a famous fortune teller visited his kingdom. The king was very glad to have the fortune teller request an audience with him. When the king was alone with the fortune teller, he asked the teller, "I am curious about how long will I live?" The fortune teller consulted his astrological charts and informed the king, "Your honor you will live another 8 years before going to heaven." The king fell into a gloom. Eventually, the news leaked out, as to why the king was in gloom.

The king had one minister who was very wise. He visited the king and inquired about the reasons for his concern. The king

was very worried about the brevity of his remaining life, he did not even care for the promised heaven. He was more concerned about his children, and who would govern the kingdom until the children became mature. He wanted to live a long life. The minister gently counseled the king to look for some better solutions to his predicament rather than drowning in gloom, and suggested that perhaps the fortune teller may be able to say some special prayers for king's long life and help the king escape from his predicted fate.

The fortune teller was recalled and the king inquired if he knew of some special prayers that would prolong the king's life. The fortune teller replied, "Your honor I know of a special set of prayers that can prolong your life, but the rituals require donation of a thousand gold pieces."

The king was willing to do anything for prolonging his life. He gave orders for the conduct of the rituals. His minister in the meantime, in the open court addressed the fortune teller, "Dear fortune teller you have saved our king from misery. May I ask you, how long you will live?" The fortune teller replied that according to stars and his charts he would live 27 more years. Before anybody could make any comment, the minister took out his sword and cut off the head of the fortune teller. Everybody was shocked to see the minister's action. The king yelled, "What have you done to this innocent fortune teller? Who would conduct the special prayers for prolonging my life?" The minister calmly replied, "Your honor, this man did not even know how long he would live. He predicted he would live 27 years and he is already dead. Your honor, then how can he predict how long you will live. Your honor, our fate is not recorded in some astrological charts or etched somewhere on a stone. Moreover, by our current karmas we constantly keep changing our fate. Based upon all of our present and past karmas, only the All Knowing God decides when the time of our death will be, not fortune tellers. None of us

know for certain what will happen in the future even a moment from now. We should all live as if, this is the last moment or day of our life and do our best to live virtuously, as well as be of service to our fellow beings.” The king thanked the minister profusely for opening his eyes to God and truth and swore away from fortune telling.

OMNIPOTENT

God is Omnipotent. God alone is Almighty the Most Powerful One. He alone creates, maintains and causes dissolution of the universe. In most religions, the omnipotence of God is usually described as, ‘God can do whatever He wants to, desires or feels like doing’. This, however, according to the Vedas is not a correct interpretation of the omnipotence of God. Who in the universe has desires? We, as human beings desire various things in life because we lack them or want them (or at least we think we lack many things whether we need them or not). God, however, is considered to be the Master of all riches and Perfection—complete in every possible manner (see pages # 32–34 and 114–115). Therefore, God does not desire in the manner we human beings do, He already has everything. According to the Vedas and Upanishads God has *EEKSHAN* which means He in His kindness offers all souls the opportunity to progress in life and get closer to Him and find bliss.

Moreover, God cannot do everything. God cannot make another God. God in the Vedas is called *AKSHARA*—Imperishable or Indivisible i.e. God is the Eternal Unchangeable Ultimate Reality (see pages # 60–61 and 86). Thus, God who is Eternal can not create another God who is, simultaneously, both eternal as well as without prior existence. Also, if one were to test God’s omnipotence by asking God to create a universe where He is not present and whose dissolution He can not accomplish, He would

lose His omnipresence as well as omnipotence as the creator and the dissolutioner. God can not make $2+2 = 5$ because this would be against the rules of arithmetic. God cannot print the book you are reading, nor make the machine by which it was printed. These are works of humans. Man, however, cannot create the raw materials (*prakriti* see pages # 9–10) of which the book or the machines are made; we can utilize *prakriti* in the present form only because it has been activated by God. In the Vedas God is called Perfection and *Vratpatay*—Masterkeeper of vows (see page # 45), even He abides by His rules. God will not incarnate as a human being or directly father a child even though many Hindus believe that God incarnated as Rama or Krishna just as Christians believe God directly fathered Jesus Christ. Moreover, God does not perform ‘miracles’ and change His own attributes and rules to convince the righteous of His omnipotence. Contrary to this view of the Vedas, scriptures of various faiths state that God performs miracles e.g. many Jews and Christians believe that to convince Moses that God is indeed God, He performed miracles by converting Moses’ staff into a snake and then snake back into a staff (Exodus 4: 3–4); many Hindus believe that to protect His devotee Prahalad and kill evil king Hiranyakashyap who was ‘protected’ because of many previous boons, God became *Narasimha*—half-man and half-lion (Srimad Bhāgavatam Purāna¹); many adherents of Islam believe that Muhammad in flesh, riding on a winged white steed guided by angel Gabriel, went to visit God in the ‘Seventh Heaven’ (also see page # 173). While such stories may have a moral value, a belief in them as authentic events are against all rules of material science, common sense and reason, and against the teachings of Vedas. (Also see pages # 176–181 for true faith and devotion.)

The best definition of God’s Omnipotence that I have found has been given by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in his books

1 *Narasimha* in *Srimad Bhāgavatam* by Kamla Subramaniam page # 166.

Satyarth Prakash and Poona Lectures (see bibliography). He states that God's omnipotence implies that God is perfectly capable of doing His works alone e.g. creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe, rewarding or punishing individual souls perfectly based upon their karmas; in such tasks God does not need other's help in completing them because God is self-sufficient.

Powerful kings and monarchs, and other persons sometimes get vain about their power. They forget that their power on earth is transient. Great empires have come and gone, sometimes by being conquered by foreign foes and sometimes by internal decay and disintegration, and sometimes because of their disruption by natural disasters. We must all remember that our power in this vast universe is infinitesimal and transient, only God is Omnipotent. This should make us humble and instill in us love, kindness and generosity for others.

ULTIMATE JUDGE

God is the Ultimate Judge who is always just. According to the Vedas God's justice is perfect in every manner. He judges us by our deeds (karma) and the intent of those deeds. God gives us exactly what we deserve, no more no less. He cannot be bribed. Opposing warring groups often invoke God's help for their side. God however, only helps just causes and truth (Rig 10: 42: 4, Atharva 20: 89: 4).

God gives us birth and after our death, according to Christian and Islamic faiths on the Judgment Day decides to send us to heaven or hell based upon our deeds. There is no satisfactory explanation, however, in any of the Abrahamic faiths regarding questions such as, "Why we are all born different," "Why bad things happen to good people" or "Why bad people or sinners seem to be rejoicing?" How can God be just when some children

are born healthy to caring and loving families with virtuous values as well as secure financial means, and others are born to poor or non-caring families? And, still other children are born deformed, with severe mental or developmental disabilities?" What did these children do to deserve such a fate—where is the justice? A statement such as, "Life is not fair," "It is God's Will," "God can do whatever he wants to," or "We as human beings do not understand God's ways" do not adequately answer these questions, nor make God just. If God creates new human souls (as is believed in the Abrahamic faiths) and gives them a miserable birth e.g. an anencephalic child (a child who essentially has no brain), and also, gives them one and only one chance ever to reach heaven (or alternately a permanent hell), then He is incompetent, unjust and unkind. Rabbi Kushner in the concluding page of his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* states, 'Are you capable of forgiving and loving God even if you have found out that He is not perfect, even when He has let you down and disappointed you by permitting bad luck and sickness and cruelty in His world, and permitting some of those things to happen to you?' In my opinion claims such as, 'Can we as humans forgive God' defy all sense of proportion, and are a sign of misguided audacity.

If God is not perfect or just, does one really need a belief in an imperfect and prejudiced God? Vedic scriptures, however, state that God is Perfect and Just and logically explain that our fate is not random because every karma has consequences and we deserve the justice we receive. The statement, 'God's justice is perfect', demands that we believe souls are not created by God but are also eternal and imperishable (also see page # 4–8). Moreover, souls have a free will and reincarnate based upon their karmas. Reincarnation would make God's justice or someone's fate at birth not random or unfair but instead based upon the karmas and the intent of the karmas in previous lives of

the person—as one would sow, so shall one reap. Reincarnation would explain why one is born in a nurturing home and another into misery and still another one is born severely disabled, existing in a vegetative state, where the person is hardly aware of one's environment—this is the result of karmas in previous life (or lives). There is no other satisfactory explanation for God's justice being perfect and yet that justice may give the superficial appearance of life being unfair. Moreover, God is constantly judging us based upon our current karmas, as well as previous karmas in this life and previous lives. This leads to the possibility that soul may reap the results of karmas at any time, at present or in the near or late future, in this life or future lives. His judgment does not wait until the one final Judgment Day. Putting one's hand in the fire would give an instant result, one would not have to wait for long to find out that the hand is burnt. On the other hand, the delayed results of karmas (in this or next life) may be compared to the harvesting of crops. A farmer may seed the fields in the current season, but it is not until the seed sprouts, grows and matures, and is finally harvested will he be able to enjoy the fruits of current crops. Until then he relies on the crops grown previously and not those being grown in the current season. Finally, because of our own failures, labeling God as being imperfect in the manner Rabbi Kushner does, according to the Vedic beliefs will be like a thief accusing the judge or the police officer to be the cause of his (thief's) punishment rather than his own misdeeds.

KIND & MERCIFUL

God is Kind and merciful. He loves everybody. In God's universe there is a place for everybody. He is not prejudiced. He does not kick any one out of the universe, from the most virtuous to the sinner. God in his immense kindness is always giving us new

opportunities to move closer to Him and find bliss. He gives new opportunity even to the sinner, to change him/herself on to the right path. There is always an opportunity for personal improvement and redemption. God, residing inside the soul, is everybody's most intimate companion—a personal God (see page 111 for details under *Mitra*), looking after each and every individual's welfare. God as the inner voice to our soul is constantly giving us enlightenment and inspiration to lead us on the correct path and to do the right thing. The inner joy and inspiration that we feel when we do the right thing comes from God. When we follow the right path, despite pressures and temptations to do otherwise, we will hear God's voice (our inner voice) speak to us and inspire us. Similarly, when we think evil thoughts or plan to do something wrong (lying, stealing, hate) God creates doubt, fear, shame or an aversion in us toward such thoughts and behavior. The reason people fail to follow the right course and commit wrong or sometimes even heinous acts is that they have ceased listening to God's voice. The more we ignore this inner voice the less we will hear it, even though God's voice is always present. People who act as though they have no conscience can be regarded as no longer behaving like humans. They may be considered subhuman in this life, and in the next life they will further reap the consequences of their actions.

God's other kindnesses are in the form of sunshine, air, water etc. He gives these things to us free of charge. All of the naturally beautiful things in the world or the universe e.g. the snow covered high mountains, the vast oceans, the moon, the stars are all God's creations and they remind us of God and His infinite power as well as of our infinitesimal power (Rig 10: 121: 4, Yajur 25: 12).

God's kindness and love, however, does not mean your bad deeds or sins are forgiven, because then He cannot be a perfect Judge. One must bear the consequences of previous karmas good or bad (go through bhoga, see page # 6). People, however, often

want God's unconditional forgiveness of current or past bad deeds, just for the asking or by doing a small 'penance,' because they believe by such acts, they have shown humility before God, and forgiveness is a just reward. Others try to bargain for forgiveness from God by chanting His name a thousand or a million times, or by giving a donation or an offering at a temple, church or mosque. Priests of all faiths promote such beliefs by claiming authority of the respective scriptures. God, however, cannot be fooled by such hypocrisy. God does not sell indulgences; only greedy priests deceive in name of God with such acts. God's punishment is not an act of vengeance but a lesson for the future. God expects us to bear His justice as well as improve our present and future karmas (deeds) towards virtue so that we may receive His blessings and move closer to attaining God realization and bliss. People have at times questioned how God can be kind and loving as well as at the same time punish people. When a mother disciplines her darling child, does she not love her child? In fact, she disciplines the child just because she loves the child, so that the child may not repeat the wrong acts again. Thus, a punishment that makes a person a better human being in the future is an act of love and kindness, and this is the reason in the case of God's justice.

Forgiveness, however, is considered a moral virtue for humans at an individual level, and is considered one of the ten virtues or moral duties that constitute dharma (Manu Smriti 6: 92, also see page # 8). Forgiveness teaches us kindness and love toward others. It also shows us that all human beings are alike. We all have elements of good and bad in us. Forgiveness reminds us that we could easily have made a similar mistake. It requires us to ask how we would like to be treated if the circumstances were reversed: would we want forgiveness or harsh punishment? Moreover, we often punish others because of vengeance, jealousy or vanity. Why is forgiveness a human virtue and similar forgiveness not expected from God? We are not the final judges of

fellow human beings, that privilege belongs to God alone and He exercises it justly. On the earth, the responsible state authorities in a similar manner are not expected to forgive criminal acts of its members as long as the authorities mete out justice in a fair and honest manner. While the societal justice is different than God's justice and social norms can differ from society to society, the norms should be based on the principles of truth, common good, equality and freedom.

Intentionally harmful or criminal acts always deserve appropriate punishment by people in authority to deter others from similar actions. The punishment of a serial murderer including by death sentence is an act of kindness to society, if it prevents harm to other innocent persons. If one as an individual wishes to "turn the other cheek" and forgive someone else's intentional bad acts, that personal choice is always possible. This kind of saintly behavior however, is not expected from everyone, including government authorities. God is immensely kind, but God also is just and punishes wrong doers and sinners.

People often wonder that if God is omnipotent, omniscient, just, kind and perfection, why God allows natural disasters or evil? Natural disasters such as the Tsunami in South Asia in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in the United States occur according to God's universal rules of creation and weather phenomenon on the earth, and only in that context they are God's will. The harangue of the preachers of all faiths that disasters are 'God's will' to punish the sinners, and their coaxing for greater piety and charity to the respective Mosque, Church or Temple to prevent future suffering is uncalled for because the preachers are usually equally ignorant of God's ways. During such disasters, based on God's judgments sometimes good people including honest preachers and/or their families may die and not so good people may survive. On the other hand, the appropriate or inappropriate responses to such disasters are the result of human (and government) activity and

not God's will. Destruction of World Trade Center and the death of nearly 3,000 innocent people is not 'God's will' but the acts of fanatic persons. Evil is human doing, not God's will or the work of Satan (in the Vedas there is no Satan). As described earlier on page # 5 for the soul to make progress towards reaching God and bliss it must be able to exercise free will but some chose to abuse this privilege for heinous acts. Mothers of infants, toddlers and young children know that a young child when allowed to explore on his/her own (even under supervision) may get hurt, however, no sensible mother would put her child in a padded cage to avoid a remote possible injury. Mothers allow their children to have the freedom to explore, to gain independence, even if at times it may mean getting hurt. God, the Mother of all mothers and Father of all fathers (Rig Veda 8: 98: 11; also see pages # 50 and 112) in a similar manner, allows His children—the various human beings, an opportunity to exercise their free will. God is not a tyrant and would not stop us by force. God as our inner voice warns us when we intend to do something wrong by creating an aversion in us towards that act. However, if we do not listen to God, and exercise our free will to perform a wrong act, then we must be prepared to accept the bad consequences (based upon the act) and God's judgment.

In summary the attributes of God that are emphasized in this chapter are the following: God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. God alone is Almighty and the Greatest Power. He is the Master of the universe with all its riches. God is Perfection and the Reality that never changes. God is Eternal, He was never born, and thus, will never die. God has neither shape nor form, yet is present everywhere, permeating every part of the universe from that which is nearest to us to that which is farthest away. God is our Ultimate Father, Mother and the Closest Friend. God is the closest entity to us because He even resides inside the soul. God is the Supreme Consciousness and the source of all true

knowledge. He is the Supreme Light that enlightens our soul. God is the Ultimate Protector and Universal Benefactor. God is Kind, but He is also just. He alone is worthy of worship. God is the source of all bliss—He is Supreme Bliss and it is only by truly knowing God, one can acquire peace and eventually bliss in one's own life.

CHAPTER 3

Various Names of God
OM: The Principal Name
of God
&
Other Prominent Names of
God in the Vedas

According to the Vedas, as described in the previous chapter, there is only One God, but in the Vedas He has many names. In my limited search of the Veda mantras I found more than two hundred names for God based on His different attributes. Om, however, is the principal name of God in the Vedic scriptures. In this chapter God's name Om is discussed at length. This is followed by a description as well as an explanation of some of the prominent names of God in the Vedas.

OM: THE PRINCIPAL NAME OF GOD

Om is the principal, all comprehensive, and most important name of God in the Vedic dharma and is exclusively reserved for God alone, like the personal name of a person. Even those Hindus who believe in a various deities, *devas*—gods and *devis*—goddesses have never named any one of them Om, nor ever made a *moorti*—idol of Om. In the Vedic dharma as well as the Hindu religion, Om is considered the initial first word, its chant the most sacred sound, and meditation on its meaning during yoga, the path to attain God realization and find bliss. When Veda mantras are chanted or recited, by convention Om is added at the beginning of all mantras (Atharva Veda 10: 8: 100). The name Om is considered to reflect God's attributes more completely than any other word. Om symbolizes that God is the Ultimate Protector, Benefactor and Savior as well as God is *Sat-Chit-Anand*: the Eternal Truth, the Supreme Consciousness, and Supreme Bliss.

The meaning of the word Om is explained in two different ways in the Vedic scriptures. (For details see the bibliography: *Satyārth Bhāskar* by Swami Vidyanand Saraswati pages 104–110.) The first directly defines Om's meaning, while second divides the

word Om in its various components.

In Yajur Veda Om is defined as *Kham Braham* which means God is the Greatest, Almighty and Creator of the universe as well as God pervades everywhere i.e. He is Omnipotent and Omnipresent (Yajur Veda 40: 17).

<i>Om</i>	<i>kham</i>	<i>braham.</i>
Om/God	like space pervades everywhere in the universe,	is the Greatest, Creator, and Almighty

According to ancient Sanskrit dictionary called Unädi Kosh Om is defined as *Avateishtlopashchh* or as *avati rakshadikam karote eti Om* which means that God is the Ultimate Savior and Universal Protector.

<i>Avati</i>	<i>rakshadikam karote</i>	<i>eti</i>	<i>Om</i>
The One who guides and protects us, One who is Universal Savior,	One who protects us, One who is Universal Protector	is	Om, God

Omityetadakshram idam sarvam tasyopavyaakhyānam
(Mandookyopinashad: Pada 1).

In Mandookyopinashad's opening mantra (mantra's of this Upanishad are usually called *pada*), Om is defined as *aksharam*—the Imperishable, Eternal, Unchangeable, Ultimate Reality. Besides God, everything else that you see or experience in the universe, directly or indirectly explain and/or point to Him.

According to the second explanation, Om is composed of three sounds A U M:

A is pronounced like the sound of “u” in <u>but</u>	} The sounds A and U together are pronounced as a long O
U is pronounced like the sound of “u” in <u>put</u>	

M is hummed like the “m” in hummmm
and not as consonant sound eM

All three together are pronounced Om. Further, the letter A is considered symbolic of the following three names of God: *Virät*—the Greatest; *Agni*—the Supreme Light which enlightens our soul and mind, as well as the Ultimate Leader; *Vaishvanara* or *Vishva*—the universe's Creator and Master. The letter U symbolizes the following three names of God: *Hiranyagarbha*—the Creator of all galaxies, stars and planets; *Vayu*—The Strongest Power in the universe; *tayjas*—the Supreme Radiance that enlightens us and gives us inner strength and will power. The letter M is symbolic of the following three names of God: *Ishvara* or *Eeshwara*—The Universal Master as well as Master of all the riches of the universe; *Äditya*—One that can not be divided or is imperishable; *Prajna*—the Source of all True Spiritual and Material Knowledge. The letter A is also considered symbolic of anand—bliss; the letter U symbolic of *chit*—conscious; and the letter M symbolic of sat—eternal existence. Hence Om also means *Sat-chit-anand* (written in Sanskrit as Sachidanand), Supreme Bliss, Supreme Consciousness and Eternal Truth and Existence. Thus, in Vedic scriptures Om is considered the most perfect name of God which symbolizes His many attributes as well as the most important name used during meditation and yoga practice.

A few other examples of God's name Om from the Vedas, Upanishads and Geeta (i.e. Bhagvad Geeta) are included below:

Om krato smara, kilve smara, kritam samara. (Yajur Veda 40: 15).

<i>Om krato smara,</i>	<i>kilve smara,</i>	<i>kritam samara.</i>
O human being,	remember Om to	remember Om
ceaseless performer	gain strength,	to perform your
always remember Om/God		appropriate duties,

In this mantra from Yajur Veda (40: 15) the soul is reminded to always remember Om (God), the Supreme Being to gain spiritual and physical strength (also see page # 14). The word 'remember' here implies that one should follow God's path of

truth with faith, devotion and surrender to Almighty God. The word ‘remember’, however, does not mean blind repetition of God’s name like a parrot. Whenever you are discouraged, remember God your Protector and Benefactor and your troubles will disappear. You will find the courage and strength to go on and feel revitalized. God will help you find the difference between virtuous and bad deeds and will guide you along the right path.

Om pratishtam (Yajur Veda 2: 13). If you want bliss in your life, exist in God i.e. surrender to God or devote your life to God.

Omityetadkshramidam sarvam tasyopavyaakhyaanam (Mandookya Upanishad: Pada 1). Almighty God Om is eternal and imperishable. Besides God, everything else that you see or experience in the universe and world, directly or indirectly explain and/or point to Him. Mandookya Upanishad is the shortest Upanishad, but it is one of the most concise and succinct Upanishads, where all of its 12 mantras (Padas) are directly or indirectly devoted to the understanding of OM (God) and its three component letters a, u and m. Moreover, the mantras discuss the aspect of God each letter stands for during meditation. This Upanishad also explains that during meditation after experiencing the significance of a, u, m, there is also a phase of silence, where no sounds exist but God is experienced as Supreme Bliss by the soul.

Omityetadkshra mudrithmupaaseet (Chhandogya Upanishad 1: 1: 1). Almighty God Om is eternal and imperishable. He alone is worthy of worship.

Sarvay veda yat padam ämananti.....aum ity aytat (Kathopanishad 2: 15). In one of the most important mantras of Kathopanishad, Rishi (sage) Yamacharya tells his keenly devoted student Nachiketa, ‘The word that all Vedas declare to be the most profound, the word that all sages want to learn, and the word all the dedicated and devoted students want to learn, in brief

I will tell you is OM along with the understanding of its importance in life’.

The following 20 mantras from various Upanishads address God as Om and describe the significance and importance of Om as the principal name of God. They also describe one or more attributes of Om, explain why and how to chant Om, and finally how to meditate on Om (while contemplating on the meaning) to attain God realization and find bliss: Brahad-aranyaka Upanishad 5: 1: 1; 5: 2: 1, 2 and 3; 5: 15: 3; 6: 2: 1; Chhandogya Upanishad 1: 1: 5, 6 and 8; 1: 4: 1 and 4; 1: 5: 1; 1: 12: 5; 8: 6: 5; Kathopanishad 2: 15; Mandookya Upanishad 1; Mundaka Upanishad 2: 2: 6; Prashnopishad 5: 5 and 7. Mantra # 1: 8: 1 from Taittiriya Upanishad includes Om nine times in the same mantra to describe God’s significance, attributes or dedications to God.

Geeta similarly describes the importance and significance of Om as follows:

Om tat sat (Geeta 17: 23). Everything in the universe exists in that Eternal Reality, God.

Tasmat Om ity udahrtya (Geeta 17: 24). Therefore, all prayers to God begin with the utterance of Om and surrender to God.

Similarly, whenever a Veda mantra is chanted, by convention it begins with the addition of Om (Atharva Veda 10: 8: 100). Sometimes Om is also uttered at the end of a mantra.

The word Om, in contrast to its true meanings described above, has come to mean many things in the West, and is rarely used correctly to signify its true meaning—God who is the Ultimate or Universal Protector and Benefactor. The misunderstanding of the word Om, is to a large extent the result of mistranslations of ancient Hindu scriptures, which are all in Sanskrit. Over the past 42 years, since I have been in the United States, the meanings of word Om that I have heard include: a strange humming sound uttered by Hindu preachers; a mantra used during yoga exercises; a word used in Buddhist prayers; the

first cosmic sound; a celestial sound; and others. The concluding segment of the Bill Moyers' interview of late Mr. Joseph Campbell *The Power of Myth* (first aired on Public Television in 1988), shows Buddhist monks chanting Om. Mr. Campbell, in his comments, calls Om the perfect divine sound made up of three vowel sounds, *a u m* and *4th silence* to complete the circle (see above Mändookya Upanishad page # 88). I agree with Mr. Campbell and others that Om in Vedic scriptures is considered the first cosmic sound—*Pranava* and the perfect divine sound. However, neither Mr. Campbell nor Mr. Moyer state that Om in Sanskrit means God who is the Ultimate Protector and Benefactor as well as God is Eternal, Indivisible, Indestructible and Imperishable. Also, that Buddhists do not acknowledge God. On a recent trip, my fellow passenger in the plane happened to be a Canadian born Buddhist nun (Tibetan tradition). We got talking about Buddhist and Hindu religions and I inquired what did the word *Om* in one of the commonly recited Buddhist prayer *Om mani padame hum* mean. She was not completely sure, but stated that she was told it meant *Buddha-head and the whole prayer stood for Buddha-head is like a jewel in a lotus flower*. I cite this anecdote to remind that one should not usurp and corrupt words which have distinct original meaning(s), and make them mean whatever one chooses to mean because Om does not mean Buddha-head nor Om is a name of Buddha. As stated earlier, in Vedic scriptures and heritage OM is the principal name of God and stands for nothing else but God who is the Universal Protector, Benefactor and Ultimate Savior.

OTHER PROMINENT NAMES OF GOD IN THE VEDAS

The following five Veda mantras give an introduction to some of the names of God that are included in the Vedas while describing the same One God. Some names of God were also

described above while explaining the meaning of Om as well as in the previous chapter while describing various attributes of God in the 16 Veda mantras (see pages 29–64).

Mantra #1:

Indram mitram varunam agnim ähuh, atho divyah suparnno garutmän.

Ekam sat viprä bahudhä vadanti, agnim yamam mätarishvänam ähuh. (Rig Veda 1: 164: 46)

<i>Ähuh</i>	<i>indram</i>	<i>mitram</i>	<i>varunam</i>	
God is called	Master of all riches, Most Powerful One, King of all kings,	our Dearest Friend and Closest Companion,	Most High and Noble, Most Sought for by learned,	
<i>agnim</i>	<i>atho</i>	<i>divyah</i>	<i>suparnno</i>	<i>garutmän.</i>
Supreme Light and Supreme Leader.	God is also called	Divine	Magnificent	Strongest in the Universe.
<i>Ekam</i>	<i>sat</i>	<i>viprä</i>	<i>vadanti</i>	<i>bahudhä,</i>
One, God	exists eternally,	sages	call Him	by many names,
<i>ähuh</i>	<i>agnim</i>	<i>yamam</i>	<i>mätarishvänam.</i>	
God is also called	Supreme Light and Leader	God the Final Judge	the life energy of the Universe.	

This mantra from the first chapter of Rig Veda clearly states that God is One but the sages and wise persons call God by different names, but nevertheless He remains the same One God. This mantra describes the following nine names of God: *Indra*, *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Divya*, *Suparnna*, *Garutmaan*, *Yama* and *Matarishva*. The meanings of these names are described underneath each name in the translation of the mantra above, and also in further detail later in this chapter. In this Veda mantra (also in many other mantras), names such as *Indra*, *Mitra*

etc. are not names of various deities or gods as has often been mistranslated by several Western (and some Indian) translators over the past 150 years. And, the mistranslations continue to be perpetuated to this day by continuing to refer to previous mistranslations. The deities and gods exist in the Purāṇas but not the Vedas. This mantra, however, in no manner implies that Rama, Krishna or Christ who were born as humans can also be called God or their names also are some of the many names of God. Also, ‘ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti’ segment of this mantra is often mistranslated as ‘truth is one, wise persons call truth by different names’. As would be amply clear from the translation of this mantra, the word ‘sat’ clearly stands for an Eternal Entity—God and not for truth used in a nebulous manner. (Also see page # 118 for definition of Sat and Satya.)

When Western scholars like Max Mueller and others who translated the Vedas during the past 150 years were confronted with this mantra or similar mantras described on pages # 29–64 which validate that there is only One God in the Vedas who is called by different names, and that the Vedas are monotheistic and not polytheistic, they invented a new term henotheism, calling Vedas are henotheistic. The word henotheistic means exultation of each god to the position of Supreme. This is pure ignorance on the part of Max Mueller, Roth and others. Sri Aurobindo one of the early Hindu scholars of the Vedas, who was also fluent in English, Latin, Greek and French in 1916 in one of his essays entitled *Dayananda and Interpretation of the Vedas*¹ poignantly critiques this assumption of the Western scholars as follows:

An interpretation of Veda must stand or fall by its central conception of the Vedic religion and the amount of support given to it by the intrinsic evidence of the Veda itself. Here Dayanand’s

¹ Sri Aurobindo first published this essay in a monthly magazine Arya in 1916. It was later republished in 1995 in a booklet titled *Dayananda and Interpretation of the Vedas* by Vedic Pustakalaya, Ajmer, India. The bold letters in the above quoted segment of the essay are mine.

view is quite clear, its foundation in-expungable. The Vedic hymns are chanted to the One Deity under many names, names which are used and even designed to express His qualities and powers. Was this conception of Dayanand, an arbitrary concept fetched out of his too ingenuous imagination?

Not at all; it is the explicit statement of the Veda itself.

One existent, 'sages'—not the ignorant, mind you, but the seers, the men of knowledge—speak of in many ways, as Indra, as Yama, as Matarishwan, as Agni.

The Vedic Rishis ought surely to have known something about their own religion, more, let us hope than Roth or Max Mueller and this is what they knew.

We are aware how modern scholars twist away the evidence. This hymn, they say, was a late production. This loftier idea which it expresses with so clear a force rose up somehow in the later Aryan mind or was borrowed by those ignorant fire-worshippers, sun-worshippers, sky-worshippers from their cultured and philosophic-Dravidian enemies. But throughout the Veda we have confirmatory hymns and expressions. Agni or Indra or another is expressly powers within himself, the Maruts are all described as all the gods. One deity is addressed by the name of others as well as his own, or most commonly, he is given as Lord and king of the universe, attributes only appropriate to the Supreme Deity. Ah, but that cannot ought to mean, must not mean the worship of one; let us invent a new word, call it henotheism, and suppose that the Rishis did not really believe Indra or *Agni* to be the Supreme Deity, but treated any god or every god as such for the nonce, perhaps that he might feel the more flattered and lend a more gracious ear for so hyperbolic a compliment! But why should not the foundation of Vedic thought be natural monotheism rather than this new fangled monstrosity of henotheism? Well, because primitive barbarians could not possibly have risen to such high conceptions and if

you allow them to have so risen you imperil our theory of the evolutionary stages of human development and you destroy our whole idea about the sense of the Vedic hymns and their place in the history of mankind. Truth must hide herself, common sense disappear from the field so that a theory may flourish! I ask on this point and it is the fundamental point, who deals most straightforwardly with the text, Dayanand or the western scholars?

Balagangadhara discusses, a similar issue related to Hindu religion in general, in his scholarly article titled 'How to Speak for the Indian Traditions: An Agenda for the Future' published in the December 2005 issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Religion (Vol 73: No. 4: pp 987–1013). He states that hitherto the presentation of the Indian traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism has been distorted in the West. He recommends that the notions of Indian Traditions developed during colonial times during the 19th and 20th centuries need a paradigm shift by fashioning 'more adequate theoretical tools than what we possess today'.

Mantra #2:

Sham no mitrah sham varunah sham no bhavatu aryamä.

Sham na indro brahaspatih sham no vishnu urukramah.

(Rig Veda 1: 90: 9, Yajur Veda 36: 9, Atharva Veda 16: 6: 6).

<i>Sham no</i>	<i>mitrah</i>	<i>sham</i>
Give us your blessings, peace and harmony for	You are our dearest Friend and closest Companion,	give us your blessings, peace and harmony for You are
<i>varunah</i>	<i>Sham no bhavatu</i>	<i>aryamä.</i>
Most High and Noble, Most Sought for by the learned,	give us your blessings, peace and harmony for You are	the Judge who gives justice and rewards us according to our karmas.

<i>Sham na</i>	<i>indro</i>	<i>brahaspatih</i>
Give us your blessings, peace and harmony for You are	Master of all riches, Most Powerful, King of all Kings, and	the Great One, the Source of all knowledge

<i>Sham no</i>	<i>vishnu</i>	<i>urukramah.</i>
give us Your blessings, peace and harmony for You are	Omnipresent, Preserver of the universe	most powerful One who maintains the order in the Universe.

This mantra sings of the glory of God by describing seven of His names based on seven supreme attributes. The seven names of God (*Mitra, Varuna, Aryamä, Indra, Brahaspati, Vishnu and Urukrama*) used in this mantra are again referring to the same One God and the mantra is not invoking seven different deities as has often been mistakenly translated. The word ***sham*** in Sanskrit means peace, harmony and blessings. This mantra asks God for His blessings for peace and harmony so that, so endowed, we may improve our lives and move onwards in our life's journey. As previously stated on page # 28 this mantra is both a *stuti* and a *prarthana mantra*, a mantra in which you both praise God and pray to God for his help in acquiring something such as peace, harmony, blessings, wisdom etc. Hence, seven names of God have been stated in this mantra instead of one.

Mantra #3:

***Tvamagnay räjä varuno, dhritvratah tvam mitro bhavasi
dasma eedayah.***

***Tvamarayamä satpatih yasya sambhujam tvamansho vidathay
deva bhäjyuh.*** (RigVeda 2: 1: 4)

<i>Tvam</i>	<i>agnay</i>	<i>räjä</i>	<i>varuno,</i>	<i>dhritvratah</i>
Dear God, You (Alone) are our	UltimateLeader Supreme Light	King of all Kings	Most High and Noble	and the Maintainer of universal rules and truths,

tvam bhavasi

You are

mitro

our True Friend,

dasma

Enlightener

*eedayah.*and worthy of
praise and worship.*Tvam aryamä*You are the Ultimate
Judge,*satpatih*Eternal Master and Protector
of the truth and
truth seekers,*yasya sambhujam*Whose gifts to the
universe are
everywhere*tvam ansho*You are Universal
Inspirer
You inspire everybody,*vidathay*in our life's journey
and struggles give us
the right direction*deva bhäjyuh.*You Divine Being are
the only worthy goal
we want to achieve.

This mantra describes the following ten names of God: *Agnay, Räjä, Varuna, Dhritvrata, Mitra, Dasma, Aryamä, Satpati, Ansha and Deva*, with their meanings described below the names. The translation of the mantra is self explanatory. In summary, it states that God, You are the Supreme Light and Leader that enlightens us; You are most High and Noble; the King of all kings; You are our True Friend, Enlightener and Inspirer; You are the Ultimate Judge, You Alone are the Eternal Truth and You Alone are worthy of our praise, please help guide us in the right direction in our life's journey. Why use ten names of God in this prayer rather than only one name, e.g. Agnay, Satpatih or Mitra. Worship of God is not repeating God's name over and over as a ritualistic prayer, but an opportunity to contemplate on the meaning of the recited names of God and the attributes they represent. Further, after one knows the attribute of God, the recited name reflects, true worship means incorporating at least a small element of that attribute into the fabric of one's life. As God enlightens others, try to enlighten others. As God is benevolent and nurtures the universe, be benevolent in your life by being helpful to others.

Mantra # 4:

Tat eva agnih tat ädityah tat väyuh tat u chandramäh.

Tat eva shukram tat brahma tãh äpah sa prajāpatih.

(Yajur Veda 32: 1)

<i>Tat</i>	<i>eva</i>	<i>agnih</i>	<i>tat ädityah</i>	<i>tat väyuh</i>
He,	alone is	Supreme Light	He is indestructible	He is the
God	the	Ultimate Leader,		strongest, Who
				moves the universe

<i>tat u chandramäh.</i>	<i>Tat eva shukram</i>	<i>tat brahma</i>	<i>tãh äpah</i>
He surely is Blissful	He Alone is Swift,	He is the Greatest	He is
and Giver of bliss.	Powerful and Pure		Omnipresent

sa prajāpatih.

He is the Master of all people.

This mantra like mantra # 1 re-emphasizes that God is One by addressing Him as ‘He Alone’ in both lines of the mantra and is called by the following eight names: *Agni*, *Äditya*, *Väyu*, *Chandramä*, *Shukram*, *Brahmä*, *Äpa* and *Prajäpati*. The meanings of these eight names are described in the translation of the mantra as well as in further detail below. The word *väyu* in colloquial Sanskrit also means wind but in the context of this mantra stands for God—the Powerful One, who gives motion to the universe. Similarly the word *chandramä* in colloquial Sanskrit also means moon but in this mantra means God who is Blissful and gives bliss to human beings.

Mantra # 5:

So aryamä sa varunah sa rudrah sa mahädevah. (Atharva 13: 4: 1: 4).

<i>So aryamä</i>	<i>sa varunah</i>	<i>sa rudrah</i>	<i>sa mahädevah.</i>
He, God is	He is the Most Noble,	He is the Destroyer,	The same
the Final	The Great One	God, who punishes	One God is the
Judge who		the evil doers.	Supreme Divine
rewards us			Being.
based on our deeds,			

This mantra describes the following four names of God: *Arryama*, *Varuna*, *Rudra* and *Mahadeva* and reiterates that He is the same God who is the Final Judge, Most Noble, Destroyer of evil doers, and the Supreme Divine Being. In the Vedas Mahadeva is another name of God meaning the Supreme Divine Being, however, the word Mahadeva in the Hindu religion is often used for deity Shiva.

OTHER PROMINENT NAMES OF GOD IN THE VEDAS

In my limited search of the Veda mantras as stated earlier on page # 85 I have found more than two hundred names for God based on His different attributes. I have chosen the following common names of God, because they represent a wide spectrum of God's attributes as well as some of them are quite frequently used in the Veda mantras to address God.

Agni (pronounced *ugni*) or its derivative *Agnay* (pronounced *ugnay*, also spelled Agne) is one of the most prominent and frequently used names for God in the Vedas. In the Vedas at the spiritual level, the word *agni* refers to God, the Supreme Light or the Ultimate Source of all Enlightenment that enlightens our soul and leads it away from darkness and sin to light and virtue. God as Supreme Light (*Agni* or *Agnay*), however, is not a reference physical light we see with our eyes but to Spiritual Light that enlightens the soul. The word *agnay* at the spiritual level also refers to the Ultimate Leader who shows us the right path to follow in life as well as leads and guides us and helps us reach higher goals in life. *Agni* or *agnay* in these mantras does not mean fire-god as it has been often mistranslated. How the words *agni* or *agnay* are used in the Vedas to denote God is described below in the following three mantras: (Also see page # 45, and 91 and under words *Agni* or *Agnay* as used to denote God.)

Agnim eeday purohitam yajnasya devam ritivijam. Hotāram ratna dhātāmam. (Rig Veda 1: 1: 1)

<i>Agnim</i>	<i>purohitam</i>	<i>eeday</i>	<i>yajnasya devam</i>
O! Supreme Light, Our Ultimate Leader,	You have always existed even before You created the universe,	I praise Thee I revere Thee,	You are the Divine Being and the Conductor of the universe, and guide of my life's journey,

ritivijam.

at all times or
in all seasons.

Hotāram ratna dhātāmam.

Dear God, You are the possessor and giver of all of the
physical and spiritual treasures or gems of the universe.

Agnay naya supathā rāyay asmān..... (Yajur Veda 40:16) .

<i>Agnay</i>	<i>naya asmān</i>	<i>supathā</i>	<i>rāyay</i>
O! Supreme Light, Our Ultimate Leader	guide us to the	right and noble path	to obtain prosperity and Thy grace

Sa na pitayva sunway agnay supāyano bhava.

Sachasva na swastyay. (Rig Veda 1: 1: 9)

<i>Sa</i>	<i>agnay</i>	<i>pitayva sunway</i>	<i>na supāyano bhava.</i>
He, God	Supreme Light, Our Ultimate Leader,	just as a father is easily available to his son,	be easily available to us for guidance.

Sachasva na swastyay.

Be our Companion for our benevolence.

Veda mantras which address God as Agni or Agnay remind us that it is God alone who is the Supreme Light, Ultimate Source of Enlightenment and our Ultimate Leader, and that we must pray only to God for guidance. When we are confronted with failure in our lives, when we are in darkness, we ask God to be the Light to guide us so that we do not follow the path of temptation. The New Testament also says: God is light and there is no darkness

in him (1John 1: 5). In the physical universe, however, *agni* means fire, light or energy. The physical fire is symbolic of the power which can purify and/or bring out the manifold characteristics of an object. For example, spices in a spice bottle have only a faint odor, but when roasted in the fire or used in cooking fill the house with their aroma. Similarly, a person has more success when he makes God his leader instead of another human. As may be obvious from the translation of the three mantras above, the word *agnay* in the Vedas does not mean fire god as it has been sometimes called because of mistranslation.

Many Hindus pray to or worship God in a ceremony performed before the holy fire called *Yajna* (also spelled *yagya*). A few people perform *yajna* alone or as a family everyday, while others attend *yajna* at weekly *Satsangs*—congregations. The majority of Hindus, however, have *yajna* performed for them by a priest on special occasions, such as a wedding, birth of a child or death of a family member, before starting to live in a new house, or before starting a new business or starting a new job. Vedic mantras are chanted or recited during the *yajna* to thank God as well as reminders and a pledge to live by the Vedic messages. *Yajna* is also conducted for environmental purification, to counter pollution created by human activities. According to Vedic scriptures, when *yajna* is properly conducted, the special woods, ghee (clarified butter), incense and herbs burned during the ceremony will purify the ambient environment in proportion to the amount of oblations offered in the fire as well as based upon the duration of *yajna*.

Yajna, however, is not in any sense the worship of the sacred fire or a fire-god. The symbolic physical fire in *yajna* represents the inner spiritual flame one must ignite to enlighten the soul and follow God. It also signifies the pledge to follow the rules of *dharma*. If the symbolic fire does not kindle an inner spiritual flame and the person does not improve his or her character

and way of living, then yajna becomes only a ritual and of little spiritual value. The true yajna as per the Vedas, Upanishads and Geeta is the virtuous conduct of life's journey so that it gets closer to God and eventually attains God realization. In Geeta, Krishna says the following to Arjuna about yajna: *Shreyän dravyamayäd yajnät jñānayajnah paramtapa* (Geeta 4: 33). *Paramtapa* (O! Arjuna) *jñānayajnah* (knowledge, educating others, virtuous conduct) is *shreyän* (superior to) *dravyamayäd yajnät* (the yajnas performed with physical materials). Contrary to the correct view stated above, many Hindus have the blind faith that the ritual of sitting before the holy fire (*agni*) and putting oblations into the fire would please God and fulfill most desires of the worshipper. God is Omniscient and can not be fooled, He is not deceived by the bribes of empty rituals unless the yajna is accompanied by improvement in the conduct of life. Such yajnas only purify the ambient environment depending upon the incense and herbs burnt but not much more.

Indra means God who is the Master of all types of wealth and comforts and the Most Powerful One. Therefore, Indra also means the King of all kings and Universal Benefactor. Indra, like Agni is a name of God very frequently used in the Vedas. God's name Indra also signifies Almighty and Universal Protector as described below in a Veda mantra:

Trätāramindram avitāramindram, havay havay suhavam shooramindram.

Havyāmi shakram puruhootamindram, swasti no maghwä dhātu indram. (Rig Veda 6: 47: 11, Yajur Veda 20: 50, Saam Veda 4: 1: 5: 2, Atharva Veda 7: 86: 1)

<i>Havay havay suhavam</i>	<i>trätāram indram</i>	<i>avitāram indram</i>
We pray to and call God who is	the Supreme Lord	Protector and
	and our Protector,	Benefactor, and
		Master of all riches,

<i>shooram indram.</i>	<i>Havyämi shakram</i>	<i>puruhootam indram,</i>
You are the Bravest and help us win our battles in life.	We pray and call You for You are the Almighty	You are King of all kings who people have always called

<i>swasti no dhätu</i>	<i>maghwä</i>	<i>indram.</i>
be benevolent to us and bless us	for You are the Most Benevolent	You Lord are the Support of Everybody.

This Veda mantra is a prayer to God who is addressed as Indra. Six adjectives have been added to word Indra to represent the qualities which define God in this mantra. *Trätaram* Indra—God who protects us, *Avitaram* Indra—God who protects and guides us and is our Benefactor, *Shooram* Indra—God the Bravest who helps us win all battles of life, *Shakram* Indra—God who is Almighty, *Puruhootam* Indra—God whom virtuous persons in need, have always called because God has always existed and is always there to help, *Maghwa* Indra—God who is Benevolent and the Master of all wealth and comforts. The prayer goes on to say, Dear God, You who have all these qualities be benevolent to us. This mantra is one of the few unique mantras that are included in all four Vedas. In some other mantras the word Indra is also used for the soul as the master of *indriyas*—sense and motor organs of the body (Rig Veda 1: 163: 9). The word Indra, however, is often mistranslated by ‘Western scholars’ of the Hindu religion as rain-god or god of thunder.

In another Veda mantra *Indro Vishwasya Räjati...* (Yajur Veda 36: 8), God is addressed as Indra by stating that He is the Supreme Ruler who rules over the universe. He is the King of all kings.

Eesha (also spelled *Isha and Isa*) means God is the Master of the entire spiritual and the physical wealth in the universe and *Eeshwara* (also spelled *Ishwara*) means God is the Master of the entire spiritual and the physical wealth in the universe and who is also the Universal Benefactor. All wealth belongs ultimately

to God. He alone fulfills both our physical and spiritual needs. (Yajur Veda 20: 32, 25: 18, and 40: 1, Atharva Veda 11: 4: 1, 23 and 24, Mandookya Upanishad: 6, Patanjali Yoga Darshanam 1: 23 and 24). We need only ask God for His blessings and do not need to go asking others. Sometimes Eesha is also translated as God the Source of all Abundance. Therefore, Veda mantras counsel us not to become vain of our material wealth, but instead to live, prosper and enjoy the things of this world without being attached to them. Earn as much as possible by fair means but do not covet earthly riches since you will not be able to take them with you when you die; only the results of your deeds (karmas) will accompany you (also see pages 10–11).

The ultimate goal of the soul as previously stated is to attain God realization and find bliss (moksha) (see page # 7) but even then the soul neither becomes Supreme Bliss nor achieves the other attributes of God. At times, such a soul has been called *Ishwara* (master of self-realization—inner enlightenment and bliss) but is never called *Parameshwara*¹ (the Supreme Master), *Jagdishwara* (Universal Master) or *Sarveshwara* (Everybody's Master) names reserved only for God.

Brahman, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Shiva:

Brahman means Almighty God or the Greatest. [The word Brahman is not to be confused with word Brahmin which is used for the spiritual teachers, one of the four major societal groups—*varana* of Arya (Hindu) society]. The word Brahman is also used for God as the Source of all true knowledge (Yajur Veda 22: 22).

¹ A few attributes of highly self-realized souls in very small ways are similar (not same) to those of God e.g. they are blissful in their personal life, however, God is Supreme Bliss. Some times even similar name(s), such as *Ishwara* is used for a liberated soul which is usually used for God, however, soul would never have a prefix *Param* (meaning Supreme), *Jagat* (meaning Universal), or *Sarva* (meaning Everybody's) added to it. The words *Parameshwara*, *Jagdishwara*, or *Sarveshwara* are strictly used for God alone.

Brahma like the word Brahman means the Greatest or Almighty (Yajur Veda 11: 5, Atharva Veda 10: 7: 17). God is also called Brahma because He is the Creator of the universe; His creative energy activates prakriti (like a Big Bang) to form the manifest universe (also see page # 9). It is at this time God establishes the universal rules for the existence of the universe and for all living and non-living things that occupy it. And, even God does not deviate from these rules. For instance, God would not perform unusual miracles, such as make our sun rise in the west, turn fish into humans, or make a wooden object come alive. He would not be born as a human being or have a son, even though many Hindus believe that God was born as Krishna or Rama, just as Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God. All these acts are against God's rules.

The word Vishnu means Omnipresent God and Universal Master. While maintaining the universe, the same God, Brahman is called Vishnu. Being omnipresent He knows everything that goes on in the Universe including what goes on even in our mind and based upon our actions and their intent he judges us and gives appropriate rewards or punishments and thus He maintains the universe (Rig Veda 1: 22: 20 and 21).

When the cycle of the universe is over, God directs the dissolution of the universe back into its primal material state. This dissolution (some erroneously call it destructive) form of Brahman is called Rudra or sometimes also Shiva.¹ The word Rudra means God who makes wicked people suffer, a suffering which could include even death (Rig Veda 2: 1: 6, Atharva 13: 4: 1: 4). Although, in the Western countries Shiva is usually regarded as the destroyer God (as one of the three dieties of God), in the Vedic scriptures Rudra is the primary name for the dissolution (destructive) aspect of God. Shiva instead stands for Benevolent God

¹ Although the word Shiva has usually been connected with the destructive ability of God, it actually means the benevolent or benefactor God who showers us with His blessings.

e.g. *Om namah shivaya* (Yajur Veda 16: 41). *Om* (Dear God you are—*shiva* the personification or embodiment of benevolence), *namah* (I pray to you and bow to you), *shivaya* (be benevolent to me). To the extent destruction of the evil or wicked persons is benevolent for the rest of human beings, Shiva can be also considered Rudra.

This trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (Rudra) are actually three aspects of the same One and Only God, which according to the Vedas can not be represented in the form of an image or idol (see page # 54–58). Contrary to the teaching of the Vedas, however, Hindus do pray to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as three separate deities in the form of *moortis*—icons/idols. (See page # 132 for details on god Vishnu in the Purānas.)

Deva means someone who gives selflessly for the welfare of others without expecting something in return. Because, God fulfills all of mankind's and universe's needs, God is considered the Supreme Giver i.e. Giver to all givers and *Deva* is a frequently used name for God in the Veda Mantras (Rig Veda 2: 1: 4, Rig Veda 3: 63: 20, Rig Veda 5: 82: 5). The word *deva* in the Vedas is also used for those persons who are generous, and always doing good things for mankind and the universe (Rig Veda 10: 53: 6). These persons are the embodiment of virtue or dharma. People such as these deserve honor and respect and are considered godly or saintly persons. In the Vedic scriptures, physical objects and forces, such as the sun, the earth, air, water and fire have often been called *deva* because of their helpfulness to mankind; and some Hindus have considered them objects of worship. Sometimes, to differentiate *Deva* (God) from ordinary *devas* (human or physical *devas*), in Vedic scriptures God is called *Mahādeva* (Greatest *Deva* i.e. *Deva of devas*: Atharva Veda 13:4:1:4), *Sanātana Deva* (Eternal *Deva*: Atharva Veda 10: 8: 22–23) or *Param Deva* (Supreme *Deva*). (Also see pages # 41–44.)

Contrary to the teaching of the Vedas, in the Hindu religion as practiced by most Hindus, *deva* is a word often used for gods, implying supernatural beings. There are many *devas* or *devatas* (male) and *devees* (female) in the Hindu religion, some of them are also considered incarnation or deities of God. They are revered and worshipped by many Hindus, often in the form of *moortis* (icons) and brought offerings. The belief in various devas is sometimes the source of confusion whether Hindus believe in One God or not. This practice of Hindus and reverence for *moortis*, however, is not very different from that of Catholics praying before icons or statues of Christ, Mary and the various Christian saints. Hindus praying to various devas or Christians praying to saints are looking for a favorite deva (in Sanskrit *ishta-deva*) or saint respectively, whom one can please either by a prayer, doing a penance, or by an offering. By such acts, there is the hope that one can barter for forgiveness and also ask for fulfillment of all or some desires without necessarily having to adopt virtue or making a real change in personal life. This of course is wishful and generally doomed to failure and disappointment.

If one needs assistance, why not pray to God and ask God directly, for He is always with us as our Benefactor and Protector, rather than asking, long deceased, alleged God's incarnations or saints, or their *moortis*, icons or idols. Giving is God's job, but He only gives to the deserving based upon our karmas (even without asking) and not because of our indirect bribe to Him by making an offering to the idol or the icon of a deity, deva or a saint. Bribe is a deception and a sin. For good rewards God demands virtuous karmas (acts) and not a gesture of penitence alone.

Soma: The word soma means benevolent or bestower of bliss. In many Veda mantras Soma word has been used for God meaning Benevolent God who bestows us peace and bliss (Rig Veda 1: 91: 1 to 23, Rig veda 7: 41: 1).

Tvam soma asi satpatih tvam raja uta vritrahä.

Tvam bhadro asi krituh. (Rig Veda 1: 91: 5)

<i>Tvam asi</i>	<i>soma</i>	<i>satpatih</i>	<i>tvam</i>	<i>räjä</i>	<i>uta</i>
God, You	the,	Master and	You are	Supreme King,	and
are	Benevolent	Protector of	the	Ruler of	
	One	truth and		the universe	
		truth seekers.			

<i>vritrahä.</i>	<i>Tvam asi</i>	<i>bhadro</i>	<i>krituh.</i>
Destroyer	You are	Noble, auspicious and	and Creator
of ignorance.		doing good for everybody,	of the universe.

Soma rārandhi nah hridi gāvo na yavaseshvā.

Marya eva sva okyay. (Rig Veda 1: 91: 13)

<i>Soma</i>	<i>rārandhi nah hridi</i>	<i>gāvo na yavaseshvā.</i>
Dear Benevolent	settle or make a conscious	just the way cows
God, Giver	home in our hearts and make	feel happy in the
of Peace	us joyful and blissful,	pastures of barley or grass.
and Bliss		

Marya eva sva okyay.

Or as human beings feel happy in their own homes.

There are 23 mantras in Rig Veda 1st chapter's 91st Suktam (see page # 52 footnote), in 22 of the 23 mantras God has been addressed as Soma—the Benevolent or Blissful God who bestows upon human beings peace and bliss. It is true that in different contexts the word soma has also been used for the moon, vegetables and medicines derived from vegetables that bring calmness or equanimity to the mind. Soma in some mantras also means neural energy that helps increase one's intellect and inner vitality (see bibliography: translation of Rig Veda 1st Chapter 2nd Suktam Mantras 1–3 by Pandit Harisharan Vidyānāṅkar). Many Western scholars in their translations of Vedic scriptures have predominantly mistranslated 'soma' as an intoxicating drink that the Aryans drank during their ceremonies. These transla-

tions and interpretations are wrong, because Vedic scriptures condemn alcohol and intoxicating drinks (Rig Veda 8: 2: 12). Rig Veda mantras # 8: 2: 10 to 8: 2: 12 clearly differentiate words *soma* from *sura* (alcohol) with *soma* being good for a person and *sura* bad for a person. Translating *soma* as an intoxicating drink in the two ‘soma mantras’ described above would be clearly silly because Soma in these mantras clearly stands for a Benevolent God and for nothing else.

Prajäpati or *Prajäpatay* means Master of all persons—Master of people (Rig Veda 10: 121: 10; Yajur Veda 32: 15; Atharva Veda 10: 8: 13). The Sanskrit word *prajä* means all persons in a community or a nation and *pati* means master. In colloquial Sanskrit *pati* also means husband or master of the household. Therefore, God who is the Master of all persons is called *Prajäpati*. The word Master, however, does not mean a slave master or a tyrant but rather somebody who looks after the welfare of all His subjects. In God’s vocabulary there are no Hindus, Christians, Muslims or Buddhists; these divisions have been created by mankind. In God’s eyes we are all human beings and He is the Master for all whether or not we are good or bad in our deeds. The type of human being we choose to be is entirely our decision. Human beings may be assigned to four different classes depending upon personal characteristics and type of deeds performed.

- *Deva* are virtuous, generous and caring persons who are always giving for the welfare of others without expecting anything in return. They have love and compassion for everybody. They are the very best among human beings. (Also, see page #105.)
- *Pitri* comprises those nurturing people who are helpful to others. They are righteous in their conduct, the kind of persons the society generally looks up to. They mostly give to others, but ask for something in return. Good (nurturing) parents,

elders of the society who are working for and promoting societal welfare generally fit into this class. The Sanskrit word *pitri* has the same root as the English word “paternal.”

- *Manushya* embodies the average person who is a mixture of both good and bad. They are mostly self-centered but do not harm others in achieving their goals. They are usually the average, normal-type people who deal in a quid-pro-quo manner. In the Vedas this has been described as *manur bhava*—become a human being first, before one can accomplish further spiritual progress (Rig Veda 10: 53: 6). Become a person who is thoughtful and recognizes that we all have similar souls (Yajur Veda 40: 5–6). A person who learns to treat other human beings with respect as equals recognizing that their joys and sorrows as well as aspirations in life are similar to ours and adopts the ‘Golden Rule’ in one’s life, “Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you.” This is the minimum expectation from human beings. (Also, see page # xiv.)
- *Asura* refers to those who are mostly bad but may have some good traits. They are generally unjust, selfish, envious of others, untruthful, often lazy and deceptive and try to gain rewards through any means possible but without honest effort. They may be very bright and knowledgeable. They may also be aware or understand what is right and what is wrong, but they do not incorporate what is right into their lives. These people usually do not do their share of the work but are always ready to demand more than their fair share of the rewards. When they fail they blame others for the failure rather than looking at their own shortcomings. The worst members of this class are called *Rākshasa* and *Pishācha*, and they are parasites of society. Their deceptiveness often causes

them to talk of goodness, and they may fool people for a time, but their basic nature is eventually revealed.

As human beings, we are all at different stages of our development and contain both good and bad elements—a result of our karmas generated in this as well as previous lives. The idea is not to indulge in self-pity because of one's circumstances but to strive to become better by living a righteous life and doing virtuous deeds. Improvement is a slow process and sudden transformations are unusual, but if there is consistent effort progress is certain. And, the greater the effort, the greater will be the progress. Because of free will, each person has the capacity to perform better karmas in the present and future, so there is always hope for future spiritual advancement. God as Prajāpati is Master of all of us and is always inspiring us and giving us new opportunities to progress in our life.

Varuna signifies God who is the Most High and Noble, the Great One who alone is worth attaining and is most sought for by the learned, and who alone is worthy of worship and prayer (Rig Veda 1: 25: 19; 1: 90: 1; 1: 90: 9; 1: 164: 46, 2: 1: 4; 7: 41: 1; Yajur Veda 21: 1; 32: 15, Atharva Veda 4: 16: 2). The word *varuna* in some Veda mantras is used also for noble persons, however, *varuna* in Vedas at no place means the deity that controls clouds, rain or water. The following mantra from Rig Veda gives an example of prayer to God addressed as *Varuna*:

Imam may varuna shrudhee havam adyā cha mradya.

Tvām avasyuh āchakay. (Rig Veda 1: 25: 19)

<i>Varuna</i>	<i>shrudhee</i>	<i>may</i>	<i>imam havam</i>	<i>cha</i>	<i>mradya adyā.</i>
Dear God,	please	my	this prayer	and	give me
You are the	listen to		or call,		happiness,
Most High and					beginning now,
Noble					today.

Tväm avasyuh ächakay.

I have come to You for shelter and
pray to You for protection.

In other Veda mantras referenced earlier on pages # 91, 94, 95 and 97, Varuna in a manner similar to this manta stands for God only and no other entity such as rain god.

Mitra, Mätä, Pitä, Sakhä and Bandhu:

Mitra signifies God who is our Closest Friend (Rig Veda 1: 164: 46 2: 1: 4). God, residing inside the soul, is everybody's most intimate companion—a personal God. When a person recognizes that God is always there as his closest friend and companion, and that God protects and guides him (through the inner voice of the soul because He is present even inside the soul), then he will never feel alone. This creates a sense of great inner security and integrity within him. A person with this belief becomes fearless in the pursuit of truth and does not sway from the correct path. Such a person always seeks God's approval rather than that of other people. He/she also recognizes that he/she does not need an intermediary like Rama, Krishna, Christ or Muhammad to reach God. He/she directly senses God's presence everywhere and is able to communicate with God. The word *mitra* in colloquial Sanskrit and Hindi, also means a personal or close friend. The true test of a friend is that he/she is our true well wisher in happiness and sorrow and not a buddy who in the name of friendship directs us towards bad habits e.g. smoking, drugs, lying, cheating or stealing. Moreover, he/she loves and respects us and is worthy of our love and respect. God of course fulfills all of these criteria and is always everyone's Friend. Whereas one of our personal friends may be indifferent towards other persons and may even have enmity towards others, such faults never apply to God. The word *Mitra* in the Veda mantras is often mistranslated by many Western scholars of Hindu religion as god Mithra simi-

lar to the Persian god of light and wisdom (associated with sun) called Mithra, however, as stated above Mitra correctly means God who is a Universal Friend. (Also, see pages # 91 and 94.)

Mätä in colloquial Sanskrit and Hindi means mother. As stated previously on page # 50–51 this description of God as mother is only symbolic; just as a child can have access to his/her mother for succor and nurturing, God is always there for our nurturing. Most religions that believe in God, often call Him as our Father, however, the Vedas are unique in calling God as our Mother also (Rig Veda 6: 1: 5; 8: 98: 11). This description of God as a mother is only symbolic in the Vedas and has nothing to do with the common practice of many Hindus worshipping the deity ‘Mätä’ which is usually supposed to represent *Shakti*—devi or goddess Durgä (i.e. Kälî) alone, but by some accounts ‘Mata’ represents a mixture of goddesses Durgä, Laksmi and Saraswati. Many devoted Hindus attend weekly prayer and worship service at ‘Mätä kä Jägaran’ i.e. ‘Being Awakened by the Mother’. Swami Vivekananda and Swami Prabhvananda, both followers of Sri Ramakrishna call the image of Kälî as ‘Divine Mother’ or ‘Blissful Mother’ (see bibliography). However, these descriptions of ‘Mätä’ or Kälî as stated earlier have nothing to do with God described as Mätä in the Vedas.

Pitä in colloquial Sanskrit and Hindi means father. God in the Vedas is considered our Ultimate Father (Rig Veda 1: 1: 9; 1: 31: 14; 8: 98: 11). As previously stated on pages # 50–51, this description of God as father or mother is only symbolic; just as a child can have access to his/her mother and father for help and advice, God is always there to guide us. God is also called Father of our fathers, grand fathers and and great grand fathers—*Pitränäm Piträtamaha* (Rig Veda 4: 17: 17).

Sakhā means God who is always our Closest Companion looking out for our welfare (Rig Veda 1: 26: 3; 4: 17: 17; 10: 7: 3). The word *sakha* in colloquial Sanskrit and Hindi means our closest companion and therefore, our closest friend just like the word *mitra* (see above page # 111).

Bandhu signifies God who is our Closest Relative or Kinsman and Consistent Well Wisher (Yajur Veda 32: 3). The Sanskrit word *bandh* means to bond or bind. Generally, we think of our parents, spouse, siblings or children as our closest relatives, however, at the time of our death or their death, these close relations are all broken. Our bonding with God, however, is never broken.

Savitā means God who is the Creator and One who always inspires us (Rig Veda 2: 1: 7; 5: 81: 1; 10: 26: 14, Yajur Veda 30: 3 and 36:3). (Also see pages # 41 and 44.) He is the Creator of the whole universe and all living beings. God also resides inside our souls. He as the inner voice to our soul is constantly giving us inspiration to lead us on the correct path and to do the right thing. The inner joy and inspiration that we feel when we do the right thing comes from God. When we follow the right path, despite pressures and temptations to do otherwise, we will hear God's voice (our inner voice) speak to us and inspire us. The word *savita* in Sanskrit also means sun and as such at times has been mistranslated as sun-god. However, as described below *Savita* in most places in the Vedas means God.

Savitā pashcāhtāt savitā purustāt savitā uttrātāt savitā adhrātāt.

Savitā nah suvatu sarvatātim savitā no rāstām dirgham āyuh.
(Rig Veda 10: 36: 14)

Savitā pashcāhtāt savitā purustāt savitā uttrātāt savitā adhrātāt.

Creator God exists	same Creator	Creator God	same Creator
on our backside,	God exists in	exists above	God exists
behind us,	front of us,	us and also	below us.

Savitä nah suvatu sarvatätim savitā no rāstām dirgham āyuh.
 That Omnipresent Creator God may and the Supreme Creator and
 fulfill all of our worthwhile desires, Inspirer may give us a long
 productive life.

This mantra is a prayer to God for a long life and fulfillment of desires and makes it clear that word Savita addresses God who is present everywhere, in all directions including below us. Savita in this mantra does not and can not mean sun or sun-god, both of which obviously can not be present in all directions especially below us.

Poornam means God is perfection, complete in every manner (Atharva Veda 10: 8: 29). God has no deficiencies. As stated earlier on page # 32, attributes such as God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, never born, never dies i.e. is immortal, never ages, has no bodily vulnerabilities e.g. hunger, cold or sickness, can only occur in an entity that is perfect. God is the Perfect Eternal Unchangeable Reality. God is also, beyond prejudice, anger, sadness or happiness unlike human beings. God does not favor one religious or racial group over the other despite the contrary claims of various religions. He loves all of us. God, being a Perfect Judge, based upon our karma gives us appropriate rewards, or punishments that we may characterize as misery or God's anger. It is only by knowing God, the Ultimate Source of Wisdom, we can aim at gaining perfection and greater harmony in our lives. Moreover God's creation, the universe as a whole is also perfect even though a few small individual components of it on the earth may appear far from perfect to us. The universe has its own harmony. In similar vein, Einstein also stated that 'God does not play dice with the universe'. Lastly, God not only is the Creator of the universe but is far Greater than the universe. The following two mantras describe God's perfection as follows:

Poornät poornamudchati poornam poornayn sichyatay.

Uto tat adya vidyäm yatastat pari sichyatay.

(Atharva Veda 10: 8: 29)

<i>Poornät</i>	<i>poornamudchati</i>	<i>poornam poornayn sichyatay.</i>
God who is Perfection	creates perfect universe	Same Perfect God also nurtures the same perfect universe.

<i>Uto</i>	<i>adya</i>	<i>vidyäm</i>	<i>tat</i>	<i>yatas</i>	<i>tat pari sichyatay.</i>
Therefore,	today we should	make all effort to know	that Perfection i.e. God	Who	nurtures the universe.

Poornmadah poornamidam poornät poornam udichyatay.

Poornasya poornamädäya poornam ayva avshishyatay.

(Brahadaranyaka Upanishad 5: 1)

<i>Poornmadah</i>	<i>poornamidam</i>	<i>poornät poornam udichyatay.</i>
God is Perfection	this manifest universe is perfection	because only Perfection (God) can create the perfect universe.

<i>Poornasya poornamädäya</i>	<i>poornam ayva avshishyatay.</i>
If we take away (subtract) the created perfection (universe) from the combined perfection	God still remains Perfection.

Incidentally, the word poornam in the latter mantra is also a perfect mathematical description of infinity. Poornam of course also stands for God who is Perfection and Infinite Being.

Akshara means God who is imperishable and can never be destroyed or divided. Thus, God is eternal, and is never born or would incarnate as a human being or any other form because any entity that is born will gradually wither and eventually die. God is beyond such withering or death. (Rig Veda 1: 164: 39, Mandookya Upanishad Pada: 1. Also, see pages # 61 and 86)

Purusha means one who is perfect and complete in every manner and is a name used for God (Rig Veda 10: 90: 1). As previously discussed on page # 52–53 a God as Purusha has been symbolically described in many ways especially in the Purusha—suktam (Rig Veda 10: 90: 1–7). In colloquial Sanskrit purusha also means human or man (male). To differentiate between Purusha—God and purusha—man, at places in the Vedas, God has been called *Purusha Mahāntama*, the word mahāntama means the greatest and most important (Yajur Veda 31: 18, also see page # 157) and in Yoga Darshanam *Purusha Visheshha* (the word visheshha means very special, extraordinary Yoga Darshanam 1: 24).

Bhagwän means one who is worthy of greatest honor, praise or worship. The word primarily is used to signify One God who is the Master and Giver of all types of wealth, who is Eternal, has always been and always will be, has never been born nor will ever die (Rig Veda 7: 41: 5, Yajur Veda 34: 38). God alone is worthy of our greatest honor and praise, and it is in this manner, the word Bhagwän is used for God in the Vedic scriptures.

In the Hindu religion, however, the word Bhagwän is often added as an adjective before or after the name of a great soul whom many Hindus regard as an incarnation of God or a deity e.g. Vishnu Bhagwän, Bhagwän Rama, Bhagwän Krishna, Bhagwän Buddha. These great souls/deities are considered not only worthy of praise and honor, but by many Hindus also worthy of worship like God. The word Bhagwän in the Hindu religion is used somewhat akin to the use of word Lord in Christianity, where Creator God is called Lord as well as Christ is called Lord our Savior. While adding the title Bhagwan before Rama or Krishna or Lord before Christ may be okay to honor such great souls, however, in my opinion this does not make Rama, Krishna or Christ same as the Creator God. (See chapter 5 pages 154–156 and 165–167 for details on this issue.)

In India in the 21st century, there are many religious leaders and ‘high gurus’ whose followers address (erroneously in my opinion) them as Bhagwän or who would like to be addressed as Bhagwän by their followers. I have personally asked the followers and devotees of such high gurus as to why they address their guru as Bhagwän. The usual answers have been the following: the guru knows many of our inner thoughts; his blessings can heal the sick; and the guru can perform miracles—*vibhooti* such as create ‘holy ashes’ out of thin air. To provoke the devotees’ common sense, I have often asked them, why you do not ask the guru to produce a pound of delicious *laddoos* (Indian sweets) or a pound of delicious Belgian chocolates instead of the ashes he smears on your forehead. Perhaps the guru can also help you find a fortune instead of his asking you for donations. Such gurus are not true gurus, but magicians and tricksters, who deceive and exploit the gullible in the name of God. While there are many genuine gurus who have great insight into their devotees and followers, and deserve the utmost respect, yet, no guru is worthy of being compared to God or praised and worshipped like God. Therefore, it would be most desirable to avoid calling any guru (genuine or false) Bhagwän. Patanjali in Yoga Darshanam aphorism # 1: 26 calls God ‘Guru of all gurus for He is untouched by time’.

Ätmä and Paramätmä: The word Atma in Vedas is used both for God—the Supreme Soul or Supreme Spirit (Yajur Veda 7: 42, Atharva Veda 10: 8: 44) as well as for the soul. To differentiate the two, because God resides inside each and every soul, God is called *Paramatma*—the Supreme Soul and the ordinary soul is called *Atma* or *Jiva* (Rig Veda 1: 164: 30). As stated earlier (see pages 4–8), the soul is conscious but lacks enlightenment and bliss. The soul can acquire them only by reaching Paramatma the source of all bliss and enlightenment. *Paramatma* is a name reserved for God alone. There is no deity (or *moorti*) called Paramatma.

Vratpatay (also spelled Vratpate) means that God is the Master Keeper of vows because all creation abides by His universal rules. Even God abides by the rules of physical science He has set up for others to follow (Yajur Veda 1: 5). God will not break His rules to please His devotees or followers e.g. God will not act prejudiced against those who are right and favor wrong doers, incarnate as a human being or directly father a child, make the sun rise in the west, create miracles that defy rules of physical science such as turn a non-living thing such as a wooden staff into a living thing like a serpent. (Also see page # 45.)

Sat, Satpati, Satya, Chit, Ānand and Sachidānand:

Sat means an entity that exists eternally. Therefore, as previously explained on page # 3 the word sat stands for God, soul and prakriti depending upon the context. In mantra *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*, sat clearly stands for Eternal God (see pages # 91 Rig Veda 1: 164: 46, Yajur Veda 32: 8; 38: 9). The word *sat* is also the root word for *satya* which means truth, whereby in some contexts the word *sat* is also translated as truth. At places in the Vedas suffix *Pati* is added to *Sat*—to make it *Satpati*, a word reserved for God and means the Eternal Master or Master of truth seekers (see page # 96 and 107).

Satya or *Satyam* in the Vedas and colloquial Sanskrit means truth, usually in the context of interaction. It can be at the level of word, thought or action. God being the Ultimate Truth in the Vedas at places is also called *Satya* or *Satyam* (Rig Veda 6: 22:1, 8: 90:2, Yajur Veda 36: 5). In the Vedas there is also an alternate word for truth—*Rita* (or *Ritam*) which means eternal or divine truths in the context of the universe. *Ritam* are the Universal Laws God sets up at creation e.g. the *ritam* of the earth is that it revolves around the sun.

Chit means being conscious or aware and stands both for God and soul depending upon the context. In several Veda mantras

word *chit* stands for God as Supreme Consciousness (Rig Veda 4: 31: 2, Yajur Veda 36: 5).

Ānand means bliss which in reference to God means Supreme Bliss and the giver of bliss (Brahadāranyaka Upanishad 3: 9: 28 and Māndukya Upanishad Kāndika 5)

Sachidānand means God who Eternally Exists and is Eternal Truth, Supreme Consciousness, and Supreme Bliss. The word Sachidānand has three components, Sat—Chit—Ānand as described above. According to the Vedas (as previously stated on page # 3) there are three things that are eternal: God, the Soul and Prakriti (Physical Matter or Universe). The attributes of these three are as follows: God is *Sat-Chit-Anand* (Sachidanand), Soul is Sat-Chit, and Prakriti is only Sat. The soul has a choice, it can reach God—Sachidānand, The Eternal Truth, Supreme Consciousness, and Supreme Bliss and itself acquire bliss, or it can be lost in the distractions of the prakriti (world) and remain unfulfilled and miserable. The word Sachidānand is only used for God and there is no deity (or moorti) called Sachidānand.

Hiranyagarbhah means God the Creator of stars and galaxies (Yajur Veda 13: 4 and 32: 3). The literal meaning of word Hiranyagarbhah in colloquial Sanskrit is the womb of luminous things and lustrous bodies. In context of God, at the physical level it means the Creator who makes shining stars and galaxies from the primordial physical matter called Prakriti and at the spiritual level it means God the Source of all true knowledge that illuminates our mind and soul. (Also see page # 58.)

Hiranyagarbhah samavartataagray bhootasya jātāh pati eka āseet.

Sa dadhār prithvim dyāmutamām kasmai devāya havishā vidhema (Yajur Veda 13: 4).

Hiranyagarbhah
God is the Creator
Of the Universe

samavartata agray
He, God as before

bhootasya jätäh
created all living
beings,

pati eka äseet.
He Alone was and is
the Supreme Master.

Sa
He, God

dadhär prithvim dyämutamäm
sustains the earth, the sun and the stars

kasmai deväya
to that Blissful Master
who gives us everything,

havishä vidhema.
we worship with selfless service,
and self-sacrifice.

Soorya means God who is the Supreme Light who illuminates the whole universe. Soorya in colloquial Sanskrit and in some contexts in the Vedas means our sun that gives light to the earth. Because God lights the whole universe including all galaxies and stars He in the Vedas is also called Soorya (Yajur Veda 3: 9; 7: 41–42; 35: 14). In addition, Soorya stands for God as the Source of all Enlightenment and who enlightens all souls.

Jyoti means God, the Divine Light that illuminates the soul (Yajur Veda 3: 9; 35: 14). In colloquial Sanskrit and in other contexts in the Vedas Jyoti also means light. To avoid this confusion between God the Divine Light and the physical light, in other Veda Mantras God is called **Jyoti-utamam**—Supreme Light that enlightens us (Yajur Veda 20: 21).

Väyu means God who is extraordinarily strong—the Powerhouse of Strength who provides the energy for the continuous harmonious motion and change in the universe (Yajur Veda 32: 1). The word *vayu* in colloquial Sanskrit and in the context of physical universe (*prakriti*) is used for air or wind, and as one of the five basic elements of *prakriti* *väyu* signifies strength, movement, motion. The word *väyu* in other contexts is also used for soul, because the soul reincarnates, it comes and goes;

a person is born when the soul acquires a physical body, and the person dies when the soul leaves the physical body (Yajur Veda 40: 15).

Swayambhu means God who is self existent. No body creates God but God creates the universe from *prakriti*. There was never a time when God did not exist and there will never be a time when God will not exist. Therefore, God is never born and never dies (Yajur Veda 40: 8, Atharva Veda 10: 8: 44).

Vishvakarmä means God who is the Creator of the orderly universe and the rules by which it is maintained. Existing within those broad guide lines, mankind has the option to exercise free will, and can create some things in a limited way. Mankind's creative power, however, is very limited and shallow when one looks at the vastness and orderliness of the universe (Rig Veda 10: 81: 2; 10: 81: 5–7; 10: 82: 2 Yajur Veda 17: 26).

Skambha: God who is the main support of the universe i.e. God who maintains and holds the universe together. The word skambha in colloquial Sanskrit means the main strong pillar that supports a building like a keystone holds the bridge. (Atharva Veda 10: 7: 7–15).

Traiyaambaka: The Sanskrit word *traiya* means three; *amba* or *ambika* means master or mother. Therefore, Traiyambaka means Master in all three phases of the universe—God who creates, maintains and causes dissolution of the universe. Alternatively, God is the Master in all three phases of time—the past, present and future. The word Traiyambaka also means Universal Mother who symbolically gives us birth, sustains us, and finally when we die gives us a new birth. Thus She (God) has been our Universal Mother (and Father also) in the past, is in the present and will be in the future (Rig Veda 7: 59: 12).

Prabhu, Rājā, Adhipati and Adhishthata

Prabhu means God who is Most Influential Entity, Mighty and the Controller of the universe. Prabhu also means God who is the Master or Ruler of the universe who gives us happiness and comforts of life (Rig Veda 9: 83; 1, Sām Veda 6: 2: 7: 12).

Rājā in colloquial Sanskrit means king. God is the King of all kings, the Supreme Ruler or the Ultimate King who rules over everyone and whose kingdom is the universe (Rig Veda 6: 34; 3, Yajur Veda 23: 3; Atharva Veda 4: 16: 2).

Adhipati means God who is Lord, the Supreme Master or Supreme Ruler (Atharva Veda 3: 27: 1–6). The Sanskrit word *adhi* means one who is over everybody and *pati* as stated before on page #108 means Master or Ruler.

Adhishthata means the Supreme Commander or Suprintendent who governs over everything. The Sanskrit word *shthata* means one who stands above everybody. God thus is the Supreme Executive. He is the One, who creates, maintains and causes dissolution of the universe.

Sushatra means God the Ultimate Defender or Warrior who defends just causes. He is the Lord who helps those who fight for just causes. He is the Ultimate Protector of those who are truly helpless. It is not uncommon that during battles or wars persons from both opposing parties pray to God to defend them and often invoke God as their defender. People should not, however, delude themselves into believing that God would defend them because they go through the ritual of prayer. God always ultimately defends the real truth and just causes. He helps virtuous persons ultimately win and destroys those who are unrighteous or evil. (Rig Veda 7: 89: 3–4).

Chakshu means the Ultimate Seer. In colloquial Sanskrit Chakshu means eyes. In context of God it means He is Eye to the universe who sees and knows everything (Yajur Veda 7: 42 and 36: 24). In

a similar context in one Veda mantra God is described as a witness even when two persons are conversing in secret (Atharva Veda 4: 16: 2). The word Chakshu for God is used as a metaphor to remind that if one does bad karma in secret thinking that no other person is watching, God still knows what one is doing. And, one will receive appropriate punishment from God, the Ultimate Judge.

Aryamä and Yama: *Aryamä* means the Ultimate Judge who judges us perfectly based upon our karmas. This was discussed in detail in pages # 74–76. *Yama* means God who is the Supreme Disciplinarian. Yama also means God, who decides the time of our death and what will be our fate after death. In contrast to Yama meaning God as stated above, in Patanjali's Eight-Step Yoga the first step is called Yama which in yogic parlance means discipline or self-control in the conduct of life, and refraining from vices. Yama includes following five self-controls that are considered absolutely essential for advancement in true yoga practice: *Ahimsa*—non-violence and love for others; *Satya*—truth in thought word and action; *Asteya*—not coveting what belongs to others in thought, word and deed; *Brahmacharya*—all conduct of life that brings us closer to God especially by being chaste in thought word and deed; *Aprigraha*—not gathering what one does not need by controlling desires and their fulfillment. In *Kathopanishad* (one of the Upanishads), *Yama* (or Yamächarya) is the name of a famous guru who discusses with his pupil Nachiketä on many subjects related to God, soul, living and death as well as how to find bliss by attaining God.

In the Puränäs (which I consider to be Hindu mythology) in contrast to the Vedas, Yama is considered the god of death somewhat like the lord of the underworld—Hades in the Greek mythology or the Grim Reaper in popular culture. As such, he is depicted as a ferocious, beastly, very powerful person whose

clutches nobody can escape. In Hindu mythology, in some places it is described that Yama himself directly takes the soul to hell or heaven where as at other places he sends his messengers to do the job. Once he has grabbed the soul, the person is irreversibly dead, and the soul cannot return to the person's body.

Gannapati means Master of all of the people in the world (Yajur Veda 23: 19), a definition very similar to Prajapati (see page # 108). The word *ganna* in Sanskrit refers to public in general or public at large where as *praja* means citizens belonging to an organized nation. This description of God the Master as Gannapati in the Vedas has nothing to do with Ganesha the elephant headed deva—god of Hindu religion as described in the Purānās. In the Purānās—Gannapati stands for Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity who was the son of Shiva and Pārvati. The large elephant head of Ganesha is considered symbolic of knowledge or intellect. People pray to deity Ganesha to remove obstacles in life and to obtain wealth and happiness in life. However, it is a travesty to believe that Shiva who is considered God by many Hindus (based on the Purānās), first of all goes into a rage whereas according to the Vedas God is supposed to be Supreme Bliss and Perfection—totally free of rage (see page # 32–34); and secondly, all knowing God does not know His own son's miraculous origin, cuts son's head off and then performs a miracle by transplanting an elephant head as a replacement. All of the latter events, according to the Vedas are against God's attributes as discussed in Chapter 2 pages # 23 to 81.

Poosha and **Pooshan** mean God, who provides for the needs of everybody in the universe whether it be man or other creatures (Rig Veda 1: 89: 5–6). In addition, He nurtures us and provides for our physical, mental and spiritual needs. God is our succor. God is also called **Annapatay** which means God is the Provider of all foods and grains for people (Yajur Veda 11: 83).

Kavi means Omniscient God who knows the minutest details of everything in the universe. In colloquial Sanskrit and Hindi *kavi* means poet but in case of God it means the Supreme Poet whose poetry (kavya) is the manifest universe as well as the Vedas (Yajur Veda 40: 8). (Also see page # 29–31.)

Bhuh (also spelled Bhoo) means God who is giver of breath and life and One who is dearer than life itself. Many (probably most) so called believers in God, contrary to their claims that God is the most important thing in their lives, when asked to devote life to God or are tempted with money, shortchange God and choose money because they want the creature comforts in life that money can buy. In colloquial Sanskrit *bhoo* also means earth because our physical body is made of various elements of earth and the earth is essential to sustain life (Yajur Veda 3: 37; 36: 3). (Also see page # 43–44.)

Kah means God who is Supreme Bliss and who gives us bliss in life (Rig Veda 1: 13: 10, Yajur Veda 36:5). When we get close to God by practice of yoga—meditation it makes our souls blissful, full of universal love, peace, serenity and joy. There are no miseries or fears left, especially the fear of death. Yoga practitioners in the state of *samadhi* experience this blissful conscious awareness and love of God. Therefore, to seek God who is the Master of Bliss we need to worship Him by offering ourselves to God i.e. surrender to Him. We do all our deeds in His service by the dedication of all our actions in a selfless manner to the service of God without any desire whatsoever for any kind of return or personal gratification. God will give us His Companionship, bliss and everything else we need in life.

In summary, according to the Vedas there is only One God, but in the Vedas He has many names based on His different attributes. Om is the principal name of God in the Vedic scriptures and is exclusively reserved for God alone, like the

personal name of a person. Just as despite a personal name, a person may be referred to as father, son, brother, uncle or friend etc., similarly names such as Agni, Indra, Varuna, Deva, Mitra etc. are also frequently used names of God in the Vedas. However, these words in other contexts generally have different meanings.

CHAPTER 4

Does God Have Shape or Form?

(Is God Anthropomorphic?)

Personification and Perception of God:

Comparisons and Contrasts of God's

Description in the Vedas with that in the

Abrahamic Faiths and Later Hindu Scriptures.

All religions that believe in God acknowledge that God is Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Kind and Just, however, as described in Chapters # 2 and 3 of this book there are differences in the meaning and portrayal of God's attributes in the Vedas, Purānas, Bible and Quran (see pages 65–81). The focus of this chapter is the perception of God in the Vedas and how that compares and contrasts with the other religions including whether or not God is anthropomorphic i.e. has shape or form.

According to the Vedas and Upanishads, Almighty God is Supreme Consciousness i.e. Supreme Spirit, Supreme Bliss and Supreme Divine Light that enlightens the soul and helps it attain bliss (pages # 29–34). Vedas further state that God has no shape or form, nor is He made of flesh or sinew and can not be represented by an image such as a picture, *moorti*, an icon or an idol (also see pages 54–58). In addition, God is eternal, never born and will never die. Therefore, according to the Vedas, God never manifests in any anthropomorphic or physical form and nor does He ever incarnate as a human being (Rig Veda 6: 18: 12; Yajur Veda 32: 3; 40: 8). No Veda mantra anywhere mentions that God has a physical shape or form (except symbolically e.g. *sahasrashirsha*—infinite headed for Omniscient, *sahasraksha*—infinite eyed for All Seeing or Omnipresent. See pages # 52–53). According to the Vedas, God is a loving God, full of love for all beings and He provides shelter to everyone. The Vedas are God-centric with universal messages for the welfare of everyone, and are not centered or focused on any historic person(s) whereby they do not cater to any select group of people as chosen people. The rishis who initially recorded the Vedas or explained their meaning never claimed themselves to be God or the incarnations of God.

In contrast to the above view, God in the Abrahamic scriptures and later Hindu scriptures clearly is anthropomorphic who has a human-like figure and lives in and rules the universe from heaven. To perform His tasks he uses angels or deities. The respective scriptures have made God history-centric, with God personally and directly involved with the protection and welfare of select groups of people at the expense of other people (also created by the same God). Also, in the Hindu and Christian religions, God incarnates as a human being. God has been represented in human form, in the Hindu religion as Brahma, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, or Shiva; in Christianity as Christ; and in the Jewish religion, as God who descends to earth in the form of a ‘person,’ fire or cloud and speaks to chosen people. In Islam, God spoke to Muhammad mostly through angel Gabriel, but during the *Night Journey* God directly physically met and communicated with Muhammad. Discussed below are brief descriptions of God in later Hindu scriptures as well as in Abrahamic scriptures. (Also, see chapter # 5 pages 151–176.)

DESCRIPTION OF GOD IN LATER HINDU SCRIPTURES

Although, all Hindus profess Vedas to be their root scriptures, yet in practice, most Hindus usually ignore the teachings of the Vedas, and follow the teachings of later Hindu scriptures such as the Bhagvad Geeta (also spelled Gita and Bhagwad Gita) and *Purānas* (see page xii–xiii in the preface section for description of Purānas). Whereas, the Vedas emphasize praying directly to God (as the Supreme Spirit) and to no other being or an intermediary (Rig Veda 6: 45: 16; Atharva Veda 20: 85: 1), and there is no mention of worshipping moorti, icon, idol or other images of God, yet most Hindus pray before *moortis*—icons of deities (*devas*

and *devis*) and consider that that the *moortis* represent God or some aspect of Him.

A large number of Hindus believe that God has two aspects. One aspect is that God is Absolute or Infinite Brahman who is the Creator of the Universe and the Supreme Spirit but at the same time is somewhat remote and beyond easy understanding. Because, this aspect of God is considered hard to access, it is often called *Nayti* (also spelled *Neti*)—not this, not this i.e. indescribable. The other aspect of God is believed to be more easily accessible as a Personal God and is called Eeshwara (this understanding of Eeshwara by Hindus is very different than what was previously described on pages # 10, and 102–103 and which was in accord with Vedas and Upanishads). The Eeshwara of *Purānas* is considered to periodically incarnate in human or other forms to rid the world of evil and make Himself more accessible to the devotees. Eeshwara once incarnated is usually called Vishnu or Nārāyana (also spelled Narayan). The devotees access to God is accomplished by worshipping His personified form as *moortis*—icons of the deities. Eeshwara who in the Vedas or Upanishads is described as the Universal Master or God of Abundance (see pages # 102–103) and is Omnipresent and Formless, in the later Hindu scriptures and worship practices becomes focused on the *moortis*.

Most Hindus, therefore, believe both in One Almighty God as the Supreme Spirit as well as in His incarnations in the form of various deities and pray to them as *moortis*—icons. The *moortis* are usually considered symbolic representations of the many facets of the One Almighty God or the ways to reach Him. The Hindu belief, both in an Almighty Brahman as the Supreme Spirit as well as in His incarnations as Rama or Krishna is not very different than the Christian belief in a Triune God, an anthropomorphic God in Heaven who sits on a Throne, God as the Universal Spirit i.e. the Holy Ghost, and His incarnation

as Jesus Christ, the son of God. Although Christian's claim they are monotheistic, in fact they believe in a 'Triune God'. In comparison to God as a Triune in Christianity, in the Hindu religion God is a 'Triune on multiple occasions' because at any given time, there was only one incarnation. In contrast to both the Hindu religion and Christianity, the Vedas have One and Only One God as a Universal Spirit that does not have a shape or form and does not incarnate.

In the Vedas and Upanishads, for example, the word Brahman is often used as another name for God and means Almighty God. As explained earlier on pages 103–105 the Same God—Brahman is called Brahma as the Creator of the universe, Vishnu as the Omnipresent Maintainer of the universe, and Rudra or Shiva as the Destroyer of the universe (more correctly dissolution of the universe back to its primal matter). According to the Vedas and Upanishads, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are three different aspects of the same One formless God, however, in the Hindu faith Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are often represented by their *moortis*. Their *moortis* are supposed to represent the various attributes of each deity. For example, Brahma is portrayed as a four faced deity as the creator of the universe, its four directions and the initial narrator of the four Vedas. The *moorti* of Vishnu usually has blue color, one head, and four arms holding *Sankha* (conch shell), *Chakra* (discuss), *Gadä* (mace), and *Padma* (lotus). The blue color is supposed to represent Vishnu's omnipresence like the blue sky, the four arms the four quarters of the universe. The *Sankha* represents the cosmic sound and the five elements of the universe, the *Chakra* indicates the cosmic mind, *Gada* stands for cosmic intellect and power, and the *Padma* points to the evolving universe. Sometimes Vishnu is shown with his wife Lakshmi—*devi* (goddess) of wealth. Thus, Vishnu in the Purānas is supposed to represent the Lord of the universe and all its wealth.

In the Purānas God is called Lord Vishnu or *Nārāyana* and He periodically incarnates on the earth in human or other forms to get rid of evil and promote virtue. Vishnu (*Nārāyana*) is usually portrayed as resting in the middle of a giant ocean of milk (*Ksheer Sāgar*) floating on a bed made from the coils of an immense snake—*shesha* and from his navel originates Brahma. The abode of Lord Vishnu is *Vaikuntha* (Heaven) and it houses many grand palaces decorated with jewels and diamonds. Lord Vishnu's divine throne is surrounded by deities and divine people. He almost always favors the race of Devatas over the race of Asuras even when at times Devatas are not generous in their behavior (though they are supposed to be) and occasionally uses trickery to defeat Asuras (see Bhāgavad Purāna and other Purānas).

Moreover, it is important to mention that in India another school of religious and philosophical thought evolved gradually that believes *Brahman* (God) and *jeeva* (the soul) are identical, the very same Supreme Consciousness and not separate entities. It is only that the soul is a small speck—*amsha* (also spelled *ansha*) of God (*Brahman*)—Supreme Consciousness but due to ignorance and illusion (*maya*) the soul (the *amsha*—speck of God) is not aware of its Godliness. The goal of the soul is to recognize its true nature as *Brahman* and merge with that Supreme Consciousness. Such believers are considered *advaita*—non-dualists (or monists) and they claim to follow the doctrines of Shankaracharya, a great Indian scholar who by most accounts lived about 1,200 years (by some accounts 2400 years) ago. Also, they believe that the manifest universe (*prakriti*) is *Maya*—illusory, only God is real. This belief is currently accepted by several Hindu organizations in India and the West such as the Vedanta Society. Although, the Vedanta followers claim Vedas to be the authority for their beliefs, monism is nowhere to be found in the Vedas. The Vedas and the Upanishads clearly identify three separate entities: God, soul and matter as discussed in detail in the first chapter (see pages # 3–15).

There are many logical objections to the *advaita* philosophy i.e. the non-dualist view that God and soul are identical and not different entities. First, why did God fragment Himself to create various souls—what was the purpose? Does God love Himself so much that He must create mini or micro clones of Himself for an audience or an admiration club? Second, who is responsible for various karmas—a fragment (amsha) of God that has become ignorant by being born or a soul that is entirely separate and different from God, because a belief in the *advaita* philosophy will negate free will and make the soul into a passive participant like a puppet in God's hand? Third, if God who is perfection were to fragment Himself and give some fragments birth in virtuous and nurturing families with secure financial means, and others in poor or non-caring families, then He would not be Just, Kind or Competent. What did the latter fragments do to deserve such a fate. Fourth, whom does God judge—an ignorant fragment of Himself or various souls different from Him? Fifth, who prays to whom—an imperfect amsha of God to God who is Perfection or a soul that is different from God to God that is Perfection? Lastly, if the soul was an amsha of God, the soul should have the same characteristics as God e.g. Supreme Bliss, Supreme Light, Perfection but the soul(s) does not. The soul has many limitations as described earlier on page # 5. The souls six characteristics are as follows: *Ichchha* desires or wishes, *dvesh* jealousy, *prayatn* effort or karma, *sukha* happiness. *dukha* unhappiness or misery, and *jnana* knowledge or awareness (Nyāya Darshan 1: 1: 10). As stated earlier God is Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Bliss and God is Perfection. God is beyond desires, jealousy, happiness or unhappiness (see pages # 32–34) because these are the characteristics of the soul.

At multiple places the Vedas state that God is Omnipresent e.g. *Eesha vasyam idam sarvam* which means God is present everywhere in the universe (Yajur Veda 40: 1 and 8; also see pages

10–11 and 29–30), however, there is not a single mantra in the Vedas that states *Jeevatma vasyam idam sarvam* i.e. that the soul exists everywhere and that the soul is same as God. Therefore, the author of this book strongly disagrees with the advaita philosophy and considers the idea that a perfect God created imperfect fragments (micro clones) of Himself misrepresents Vedas, and its roots are not the Vedas. The main text of this book expounds on the trinity of God, souls and prakriti (physical matter) as three distinctly separate eternal entities, and considers them to be integral part of the core fundamental beliefs of the Vedic Dharma as previously discussed in chapter # 1 pages 3–15. The purpose of the soul is to rise above its usual attachments to transient pleasures of the physical universe and make effort to attain God and find bliss (moksha). On the other hand, the non-dualists (advaita followers) believe that when an amsha of God (whom others call soul) overcomes ignorance, it realizes that it is same as God, it becomes liberated, merges completely with God and is never reborn. Some non-dualists also believe that soul is not responsible for the performance of any karma, but instead is a passive or silent witness to the actions of the body and mind; this belief also is against Vedic scriptures which declare soul has free will, it is action oriented and is solely responsible for its actions.

DESCRIPTION OF GOD IN THE ABRAHAMIC FAITHS

In both the Jewish and Christian faiths God is represented as a human-like father figure, who as a Supreme King sits on a throne in heaven, and is surrounded by angels and elders, and from there He rules the world. Genesis says ‘So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them’ (Genesis 1: 27) and ‘The man and his

wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden.....' (Genesis 3: 8). The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took them wives as they chose (Genesis 6: 2). In Exodus Moses sees God as a 'Burning Bush' that calls him out of the Bush, 'Moses, Moses', (Exodus 3: 4). Then to convince Moses He is God, He does miracles by converting Moses' staff into a snake and then snake back into a staff (Exodus 4: 3-4). Later Moses and others see God at Mount Sinai which 'was all smoking because the Lord had come down upon it in fire; Whenever Moses spoke God answered him in peals of thunder' (Exodus 19: 18-19). Lastly, in the Exodus God gives Moses 'Stone Tablets' that God Himself had inscribed (Exodus 24: 12). In the Book of Numbers God descends in a cloud, 'Then the Lord descended in the cloud and spoke to him (Moses). He took back part of that same spirit which He had conferred on Moses and conferred it on the seventy elders; as the spirit alighted on them, they fell into a prophetic ecstasy, for the first and only time' (Numbers 11:25). Isaiah describes God as 'I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the skirt of his robe filled the temple. About him were attendant seraphim, and each had six wings; one pair covered his face and one pair his feet, and one pair was spread in flight. They were calling ceaselessly to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory' (Isaiah 6: 1-3). The Revelation of John describes a similar version of God 'There in heaven stood a throne, and on the throne sat one whose appearance was like the gleam of jasper and carnelian; and round the throne was a rainbow, bright as an emerald. In a circle about this throne were twenty four other thrones, and on them sat twenty four elders, robed in white and wearing crowns of gold. From the throne went out flashes of lightening and peals of thunder. Burning before the throne were seven flaming torches, the seven spirits of God, and in front of it stretched what seemed a sea of glass, like a sheet of ice. In the center, round the throne

itself, were four living creatures, covered with eyes, in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, the second like an ox, the third had a human face, the fourth was like an eagle in flight. The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, had eyes all over, inside and out; and by day and night without a pause they sang: Holy, holy, holy is God the sovereign Lord of all, who was, and is, and is to come!' (Revelation 4: 1–8).

In the Islamic faith God is again a human like figure who as a Supreme Lord resides in the seventh heaven and rules as well as judges from His Throne with 'angels circling about the Throne, giving glory to their Lord' (Quran 39: 75). Muslims believe that on the Judgment Day, people will be divided into three groups, those on the God's right will be blessed, those on God's left will be damned and those on the front will be foremost (Quran 56: 6–12). Also, God keeps record of all persons and their deeds in books: The record of the righteous will be kept before God in the sealed books *Illiyyun* and of the sinners in book *Sijjin*; both of the books will be opened on the Judgment Day and righteous sent to heaven and sinners to hell (Quran 83: 8 to 21). The heaven where God will admit the righteous would consist of peaceful gardens and vineyards watered by running streams, and high-bosomed maidens for companions: a truly overflowing cup (Quran 22: 23 and 78: 31). The righteous will dwell in bliss reclining on soft couches, will get pure nectar to drink, tempered with the waters of Tasnim to refresh them-selves (Quran 83: 22). God sends angel Gabriel to Muhammad (but does not directly come himself to Muhammad) to tell him the Quran is for the benefit of the righteous and faithful.

In the Old Testament, though God primarily lived in the heaven, periodically He in person or in the guise of a burning bush, fire or cloud descended to the earth to counsel the prophets to follow His message. In the New Testament God had evolved. He became a Triune and a fraction of Him came to earth as an

incarnation in the form of Jesus Christ to guide people to follow the virtuous path. In the Quran, God no longer directly came to earth, instead He sent angel Gabriel as a messenger to relate to Muhammad His advice for mankind. The Night Journey is the only time God chose to directly meet and talk with Muhammad. If this evolution of God were to be true, God has progressively become more remote from human beings.

IS GOD ANTHROPOMORPHIC: A CRITIQUE

If God is truly a human like figure, as described above by the Hindu or Abrahamic faiths, then what are His detailed physical features? Is God tall or short, skinny or fat? Is God 5 feet, 10 feet, 50 feet or 100 feet tall, or perhaps He is a Giant even greater than 100 feet tall? Does God look like a Black African, White Caucasian, Arab, South Asian, or East Asian, or is He a blend of all? Is His color brown, white, black or blue? Does God have brown or blue eyes, or may be even hazel or green? Does He have hair on His head or is He bald? Does He have beard and mustache or is He clean shaven? Is His hair white, gray, black, brown, blond, red or does his hair color change depending upon who sees Him? How many arms does God have; two, four or more arms? What is the size of His biceps? Does God walk like human beings so that we can hear Him walk? Does God look like an old man, middle aged man or is He very young looking? What kind of clothes does He wear and are they always the same or does He change them? Who sews His clothes and who does His laundry? Does God look anything like that depicted by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel or is God's picture a figment of Michelangelo's imagination based on descriptions in the Bible. Does God have bodily functions such as getting hungry or the need to use the toilet? Does God eat food and if so what does

He eat? How often does God eat—once daily, twice daily or He nibbles all day long the offerings He receives? Does God like offerings of meat especially calves or lambs or does God prefer fruits and vegetables to stay healthier? Are the gardens and fruit trees in the heaven for God's use only or are they also available to virtuous souls who reach heaven? Does God at times take rest only, or does He also sleep? Where does He rest and sleep—on a throne, a giant bed or on a bed made from the coils of immense snake—*shesha*? What kind of a mansion does God have? Does the mansion look like a palace of a Chinese, European, Indian or an Arab King? What are the dimensions of His mansion and how much bigger is it compared to the largest mansion on the earth, and which galaxy is it located in?

Is God at times a human like figure, at other times in the form of fire and still others in the form of clouds? Does God personally inscribe on stones as we humans do and in what language and script? Moreover, is God a magician or somebody who defies rules of material science that He Himself created? Would God and can God convert a wooden staff into a live serpent and a live serpent into a wooden staff and does God perform similar other miracles? For the author of this book, the answer to such questions is a definite no.

Does God who is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent need 'Elders' counsel or witness to mete out justice or does God need their audience? Can God who is Omnipresent (including being inside the soul) not directly talk to wise persons, sages or prophets, or does He need intermediaries e.g. angels to relay communications for Him? Does an Omnipresent God truly have a left, right and front then what about his back? Is Omniscient God so forgetful that He needs the help of books to remember deeds of various human beings on the Judgment Day? If God needs the help of books, how can He be Omniscient? Does Omnipotent God need to be born as Vishnu, Rama, Krishna or Christ to destroy evil or redeem mankind? The Sanskrit word for God's

incarnation is *Avatāra*. Avatāra means something that descends to earth from 'heaven'. God being omnipresent, however, is already present everywhere. Therefore, how can He descend anywhere? Moreover, if God were to incarnate, what percentage fraction of Him incarnates and what fraction is left behind in heaven? Finally, if God created man in His image (Genesis 1: 27) and man has many shortcomings such as greed, jealousy, anger etc. etc., is God also afflicted with same vices or is God rendered imperfect only by being born in human flesh?

HOW SHOULD ONE PERCEIVE GOD?

In the context of the above discussion, the question arises “How should one perceive God?” This is an important question to answer because it will enable a person to make a crucial decision in life regarding, to whom does one pray and how should one pray? Should God be perceived in anthropomorphic—human like form or perceived as formless Supreme Spirit? Can God be a ‘Triune’ only once as believed by Christians or perhaps He can be a ‘Triune’ on more than one occasion as believed by Hindus? Is the One God of all religions the same One God or are there many different versions of ‘One God’? If we truly were to have more than ‘One God,’ are various faiths claiming superiority of their God by ascribing more fantastic miracles to Him than described in others’ scriptures. Do human-like images of God described above truly represent Him? Has God created man in His image, or as discussed above, have various religions created God in the image of human beings, bestowing on God the qualities that we humans want God to have?

Attributes such as Supreme Spirit and Bliss as well as Perfection, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent, can exist only in a God who is eternal, never born—never dies and is formless—a God who always maintains Unity whereby He does

not incarnate. Moreover, a Perfect God can not be prejudiced and must judge individuals by their deeds rather than be partial to one historic or religious group over the other. Omniscient and Omnipotent God does not need other deities, ‘Elders’ audience or angels with wings to do His work, mete out justice, or act as intermediaries to relay His messages? God does not have to incarnate in human form or perform miraculous tricks to show His Godliness or His Love and Kindness for human beings. Omnipresent God is present inside everybody’s soul as a Personal God, all we need to do is listen.

HOW GOD IS PERCEIVED IN THE VEDAS?

According to the Vedic scriptures as explained in Chapters 2 and 3 (especially see pages 29–34, 40–52, and 62–64), Almighty God has no shape or form and is not made of flesh as human beings are. Therefore, God can not be described in anthropomorphic form except symbolically. Instead God the Creator of the universe is perceived as Supreme Consciousness or Spirit that is always our Closest Companion, Supreme Light or Knowledge that enlightens us and Supreme Bliss that makes us peaceful and blissful. The following mantra describes how to perceive God.

God is the Universal Master, Supreme Spirit, Supreme Bliss and Divine Light.

Prajäpatih charti garbhay antah adrashyamäno bahudha vijäyatay.

Ardhena vishvam bhuvanam jajän yadasya ardham katmah sa kaytuh. (Atharva Veda 10: 8: 13)

<i>Prajäpatih</i>	<i>garbhay antah charti</i>	<i>adrashyamäno</i>
God who is Master and	exists and is active inside	God is invisible i.e.
Protector of all people,	everything in the universe,	He is not perceived
		by the senses,

bahudha vijāyatay.

but God is known by
many other ways.

Ardhena vishvam bhuvanam jajān

An aspect of God is known by His
Creation i.e. all the stars and galaxies in the universe,

yadasya ardham sa

other aspects of God are

katmah

Supreme Bliss

kaytuh.

and Divine Light.

This mantra starts by stating God is the Universal Master and Protector of all persons in the universe, not just of some chosen people. He constantly judges and rewards us based upon our actions. The mantra further states that not only God exists inside everything but is also active—He is called *Sarvbhoot Antarātma*—Supreme Spirit that resides inside everybody's soul (Katho Upanishad 5: 12, Shvetashwara Upanishad 6: 11, Geeta 18: 61) or *Antaryāmi*—One who exists inside everything (also see below pages # 143–144). After creation of the universe, God does not go to sleep, He constantly interacts. God maintains order in the universe under constant physical rules and He judges individual souls based on their karmas.

Next, the mantra states that God is invisible, He is not perceived by the senses but God is known by many other ways. Through its method of physical observation, modern science can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God. The existence of God can only be directly perceived by the soul through the practice of spiritual science of meditation (yoga). An aspect of God is indirectly perceived by His creation, the orderly universe with all the stars and galaxies. The universe is not a chance or random event of matter (prakriti), but is created and maintained by God's universal laws.

The mantra ends by stating that God is also known by His two other attributes: God is Supreme Bliss and He is the Supreme Divine Light. When we get close to God by practice of yoga—meditation it makes our souls blissful, full of universal love, peace, serenity and joy. There are no miseries or fears left especially fear of death. Yoga practitioners in the state of

samadhi experience this blissful conscious awareness and love of God and have described the same in yoga texts. Mystics of other religions at places have also described similar experiences. The word *kaytuh*¹ in the mantra means Rays of Supreme Light that enlighten us. God is the Divine Benevolent Light of Infinite knowledge that enlightens our souls with true knowledge as well as that illuminates the whole universe. (Also, see pages 98–100 and Mundaka Upanishad 2: 2: 9–11). With that Light all veils of doubts and the darkness of ignorance are gradually removed because such knowledge comes from God, the Source of Infinite Knowledge. A person acquires true knowledge and begins to see things clearly as they truly are, and what is truly important in life.

SUPREME CONSCIOUSNESS OR SUPREME SPIRIT

God is perceived as the inner voice to the soul—*Antarätma* i.e. Supreme Spirit that resides inside everybody's soul (Katho Upanishad 5: 12 and Shvetashwara Upanishad 6: 11) or *Antaryämi*—One who exists inside everything (Rig Veda 8: 101: 14; 10: 82: 7, Mundakopanishad 3: 1: 5). As stated earlier on pages 35–37 in discussion of the attributes of God and pages 40–44 in the explanation of God's names Savita and Deva, when we think evil thoughts or plan to do something wrong (lying, stealing, hate) God as the inner voice to the soul creates doubt, fear, shame or an aversion in us toward such thoughts and behavior. Why is the 'inner voice' God's voice and not our own? This is because whom we call 'I or me' actually wants to do the 'something wrong' but some other (God's) voice from inside warns us against it. The

¹ The Sanskrit word *Kaytuh* also means flag but in the context of this mantra means Divine Rays of Light that enlighten a soul and point to God.

reason people fail to follow the right course and commit a sin or sometimes even heinous acts is that they have ceased listening to God's voice. The more we ignore this inner voice the less we will hear it, even though God's voice is always present. Similarly, the inner joy and inspiration that we feel when we do the right thing comes from God. God as the inner voice to our soul is constantly giving us enlightenment and inspiration to lead us on the correct path and to do the right thing. When we follow the right path, despite pressures and temptations to do otherwise, we will hear God's voice (as our inner voice) speak to us and inspire us. It is in this form only that God is a Personal God for everyone who looks after our welfare. This is the reason why God in many Veda mantras is called *Mitra* (also see page # 111) signifying that God is our Closest Friend or Companion (Rig Veda 1: 164: 46 2: 1: 4). Thus, residing inside the soul, God is everybody's most intimate companion—a personal God. When a person recognizes that God is always there as his/her closest friend and companion, and that God protects and guides him/her (through the inner voice of the soul), then he/she will never feel alone. This, however, does not mean that being a Personal God, He forgives our sins because as stated earlier (see page # 74) God is also a Perfect Judge and judges us based on our karmas. The Supreme Spirit that resides everywhere including inside the soul of every person, in the Vedic scriptures besides *Antarätma* is also called *Paramätma*. In the Abrahamic scriptures the only place where a similar view of God as residing inside the soul exists is in the Gospel of Thomas: Saying # 3, Jesus says 'the Kingdom is within you

This view of God in the Gospel of Thomas, however, is quite different from that in the canonical four Gospels of the New Testament which imply that Kingdom of Heaven is to arrive in the future (also see page # 36).

SUPREME LIGHT AND THE SOURCE OF INFINITE KNOWLEDGE

God may also be perceived as the Divine Benevolent Light of Infinite knowledge—*Prakāshswaroop* and *Jñānswaroop* that illuminates our souls with true knowledge (also see pages # 29–31, Yajur Veda 35: 14; Mundaka Upanishad 2: 2: 9–10; 3: 1: 3). God as Supreme Light here, however, is not a reference to physical light we see with our eyes but to Spiritual Light that enlightens the soul (also see pages 98–100 under Agni). In the Vedas God at places is called *Jyoti* or *Jyoti-utamam*—Supreme Light that enlightens us (Yajur Veda 20: 21). Mundakopanishad Mantra 2: 2: 10 states that compared to the brightness of God (the Supreme Light), the light of the sun, moon, lightening or fire appears dim and insignificant because all of the light and brightness in the universe is dependent upon the brightness of God. During the advanced stages of yoga practice and meditation, God is perceived (seen) as the Supreme Light which enlightens one from within. With that Light, all veils of doubt and the darkness of ignorance are gradually removed because such knowledge comes from God, the Source of Infinite knowledge. A person acquires true knowledge and starts to see things clearly as they really are, and what is truly important in life. According to Patanjali such knowledge is called *vivek-khyati* (Patanjali Yoga Darshanam: 2: 26). One starts to enjoy serenity and peace as well as appreciate the completeness and perfection of God and His creation the universe. One learns to recognize that the small or big shortcomings we see in our lives and our surroundings are the result of our (human) activity and are not God's creation.

SUPREME BLISS

We as humans can also perceive God as Supreme Bliss—*Ānandswaroop*. (Rig Veda 1: 13: 10). When we get close to God by practice of yoga—meditation it makes our souls blissful, full of universal love, peace, serenity and joy. There are no miseries or fears left especially fear of death (Yajur Veda 40: 6). Yoga practitioners in the state of *samādhi* experience this blissful conscious awareness and love of God and have described the same in yoga texts. Mystics of other religions have also described similar experiences.

God is also perceived as the Supreme Master who is the Creator of the universe and is Almighty (Omnipotent), Omniscient and Omnipresent. He is present everywhere in the universe as our closest Friend as well as the Universal Protector and Benefactor. God is also recognized as the Master of all spiritual and material abundance. He is perceived as the Supreme Consciousness and Spirit, the Infinite Power that is the Source of all true joy, love, peace and bliss.

In summary, according to the Vedas (and also the author of this book), no icon, idol or a picture can ever adequately represent God. Also, representing God as a resplendent superhuman physical being, clothed in long flowing robes, sitting on a throne in the heaven is erroneous. God does not incarnate as a human being and does not perform miracles that defy rules of physical science to prove that He is God. Any human like image of God that we can create on the earth or in the heavens will only have those qualities we can envision and represent in the image, and this limits our conception of God who is Infinite, without shape or form and beyond description by words alone. During true prayer, meditation and yoga practice¹, one directly attains God realization (without the necessity of going through

¹ For detailed discussion of prayer and worship of God according to Vedic scriptures, the reader is referred to a companion book, *The Essence of the Hindu Religion: with an introduction to Vedas and Yoga*, by Sudhir Anand pages # 55–68 (see page # xxii for details).

intermediaries) and perceives Him as the Supreme Spirit that is present everywhere including inside one's soul, the Supreme Divine Light that enlightens the soul from within with true and virtuous knowledge, and also as Supreme Bliss that makes a person full of bliss, peace and love. (See page # 7 for explanation of the words 'attain God realization'.)

CHAPTER 5

*Is Any Religion Superior to Others in
Explaining and/or Reaching God?
&
True Faith, Reason and
Devotion to God*

IS ANY RELIGION SUPERIOR TO OTHERS IN EXPLAINING AND/OR REACHING GOD?

One of the main premises of this book is that there is but One God in the universe, sages or wise persons call Him by different names, yet as stated in the last chapter, there are considerable differences among various religions regarding God's attributes especially related to whether or not God is anthropomorphic and whether or not He incarnates as a human being. The second premise of this book is that belief and faith in God should be based upon reason, logic and truth instead of dogma and blind faith. While God may never be fully knowable to mankind and remain a mystery to an extent, but that would not make God not follow laws of the physical nature He has created. This premise is discussed in this chapter in considerable detail along with the topic whether the claims of superiority of any religion are valid and can withstand scrutiny.

Most of us generally believe that the religion in which we were raised or have adopted is better or superior to others and often find the beliefs of other religions quaint, strange or disagreeable. We often are willing to believe and follow the tenets or dogmas of our religion on faith as true facts, and question others' beliefs on the basis of reason, logic or prejudice. As believers we are willing to have faith in all types of fantastic beliefs, myths, miracles and stories of our scriptures as true events whether they are from the Purānas (Hindu religion), Bible, Quran, or the Buddhist scriptures. But at the same time we question miracles or stories described in the scriptures of other faiths and consider them to be myths or tall tales. Moreover, we are often critical of other religions by focusing on their rituals and fringe practices while

ignoring the rituals and fringe practices in our own religion.

We all have a free will and may believe whatever we choose, but are our beliefs and faith in God based on truth, common sense and reason, or upon our upbringing and unsubstantiated dogmas as well as upon unbelievable miracles and myths? Until we truly open our mind and intellect to critically look at our own beliefs, accepting only those which are true based on rigorous reasoning, we will not progress in our life's journey towards reaching God or finding truth or bliss.

This chapter initially discusses the claims of superiority of the various religions and whether the basis of these claims have valid reasoning or are they the claims of the autocratic hierarchy or 'guardians' of the religion. This issue is discussed in the context of some of the tenets, dogmas, miracles and religious practices in the Hindu religion, Christianity and Islam. The chapter concludes with the topic of true faith, reason and devotion to God.

HINDU RELIGION

The reader may be quite aware by now that there is a wide spectrum of religious practices in the Hindu religion not unlike Christianity. Most Hindus (not all) believe in the incarnation of God as Rama and Krishna, as well as in various deities as the many manifestations or facets of the same One Almighty God. Also, they find it a lot easier to pray to the *moortis* (icons) of the deities than directly pray to the formless Almighty God called Om or Brahman. They justify such belief because Hindu scriptures such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagwad Geeta and Purānas at multiple places state or imply that Rama and Krishna were incarnations of God during different periods in ancient Indian History. Western historians have usually described the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as legends. Hindus, on the other hand, believe them to be the true record of their history,

to which perhaps myths and legends were added illustrating the supernatural forces assisting and protecting the righteous persons. They believe this is similar to what occurred in the Bible, Buddhist scriptures or the Quran. The Hindus generally have been tolerant of the claims of the supernatural events in other religions but at the same time question others' claims of superiority.

Bhāgavada Purāna is a text primarily devoted to the Divinity of Krishna i.e. Krishna is same as God (also see page # xii for Purānas). Although, Bhāgavada Purāna describes various incarnations of God, it considers Krishna to be the last and most perfect incarnation of God. It recites many miracles about Krishna's life beginning with his birth and continuing throughout his whole life. Here, I cite one of these miracles at Krishna's birth. Krishna, though a prince by royal lineage, was born in a prison because his father king Vasudeva and mother queen Devaki were imprisoned by his maternal uncle king Kansa who was very powerful and a tyrant. At the time of Krishna's parents wedding, King Kansa was very happy to marry his sister Devaki to Vasudeva, however, towards the end of the celebration, a voice from the sky prophesied that the 8th child of the couple will be the cause of Kansa's death. This prophecy put Kansa in a very paranoid state and led him to commit many atrocities. Kansa killed all of the first seven children born to Vasudeva and Devaki. According to the Bhāgavada Purāna, at the time of Lord Krishna's birth in the middle of the night, locks to multiple guard doors of the prison, all spontaneously opened up so that Vasudeva could take baby Krishna across rain swollen river Yamuna to a place called Gokul. There, Vasudeva exchanged baby Krishna with a newborn baby girl born to his friend and vassal king Nanda and then returned to the prison. On his return all of the prison locks spontaneously relocked. This all happened without even a single prison guard becoming aware of any of the happenings. During my childhood I would ask my relatives who believed in God's

incarnation as Krishna, “How could locks spontaneously unlock and relock? This is against common sense.” The usual reply I received was, “God can do anything He pleases.” As discussed previously regarding God’s omnipotence (page # 72), even God follows laws of material science and acts such as spontaneous locking and unlocking of locks can not happen (also see pages # 161–162 and 173–174 for miracles in Christianity and Islam respectively). Bhāgavata Purāna even states that by merely listening to the stories of Krishna one can obtain salvation. This is in sharp contrast to the Vedas and Geeta both of which emphasize the need to perform virtuous karmas—deeds to obtain salvation. Also, as stated earlier according to the Vedas, God does not incarnate in the human form and incarnation is incompatible with His various attributes (see pages # 27–79). I consider Purānas to be far removed from the Vedic scriptures, and consider the description of miracles in them to be either major distortion of the truth or total myths (Also see page # xii preface section.)

The Geeta (also spelled Gita), in contrast to the Purānas, is a philosophical discourse that took place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra within the epic Mahabharata. It is a dialogue between Krishna and his closest disciple Arjuna (the most skillful warrior amongst the righteous Pāndava brothers) about the nature of God, the soul, yoga, proper duties (*dharma*, *yajna*) of human beings and the attainment of God. Geeta is the most famous of the Hindu scriptures in the West and has often been called the Song Celestial or the Hindu Bible. Therefore, I have focused on Geeta to discuss the Divinity of Krishna. Throughout Geeta, Krishna is addressed as Bhagwān i.e. Lord Krishna (see pages # 116–117 for definition of Bhagwān). Most translations of the Geeta both in Hindi and English (also in other Indian Languages) clearly identify Krishna as God—as the God’s manifest form (Geeta 12: 2, 4, 6–11) in contrast to the unmanifest Absolute Brahman (Geeta 12: 3, 5) (see translations of Geeta by Radhakrishnan,

Geeta Press Gorakhpur, and Schweig). At the beginning of the 12th Chapter (12: 1) in Geeta, Arjuna asks Krishna which yoga path is easier to attain God—whether it is meditation on God’s manifest form as Krishna or direct meditation on unmanifest Absolute Brahman. Krishna in verses 12: 2–11 replies by stating that both paths lead to the same goal, but it is easier to reach God through him (Krishna) the manifest form of God. This statement is similar (though not same) to the New Testament statement that one can achieve salvation only through Christ (John 14: 6). A few translations of Geeta in contrast to the majority view described above state that Krishna was a great yoga-master—yogeshwara Krishna who had attained God realization but was not God, and he was acting as a spokesperson for God and an enlightened true guru to his dear disciple Arjuna (see translations by Swami Samarpananand, Vidyanand Videha and Vedvrat Vidyalkar).

Although, as stated above that in many verses of the Geeta, Krishna is clearly identified as God, the Blessed Lord or Supreme Lord (12: 2, 4, 6–11; 18: 66–71), nevertheless in the concluding chapter of Geeta in some of its most well known verses, Krishna clearly differentiates himself from God, the Master of the universe (Geeta 18: 61–62).

Ishwarah sarvabhutänäm hriddayshay arjuna tishthati.

Bhrämayan sarvabhutäni yanträrudhänäi mäyayä. (Geeta 18: 61)

<i>Arjuna</i>	<i>ishwarah</i>	<i>sarvabhutänäm hriddayshay tishthati.</i>
Dear Arjuna,	God, the	resides in the heart (soul) of all beings.
	Master of Universe	

<i>yanträrudhänäi mäyayä bhrämayan</i>	<i>sarvabhutäni.</i>
God is instrumental in properly directing and moving	all beings.

Tam eva sharnam gaccha sarvabhävayna bhärata.

Tatprasädät paräm shāntim sthānam prāpsyasi shāshvatam.

(Geeta 18: 62)

<i>Tat prasādāt</i>	<i>parām shāntim</i>	<i>prāpsyasi</i>	<i>shāshvatam sthānam.</i>
The reward	supreme peace,	and you will	eternal abode
of your action		obtain	i.e. moksha.
would be			

I have a great deal of reverence for Krishna and many of Geeta's teachings e.g. what is dharma, the attributes of the soul, virtuous and proper karmas, and various types of spiritual yoga because they are identical to the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads. I personally, however, do not believe that Krishna is God and that a master yogi like Krishna did or would have called him-self God, the Creator of the universe. I believe that his followers to glorify his greatness added the title Bhagwän (Lord) before his name and added or modified verses in the Geeta which state or imply that Krishna is the manifest form of the Creator God. According to the Vedas as discussed earlier on pages # 30, 32 and 54, God is never born whereby any human being who claims himself or herself same as God would be wrong. Whether Krishna himself actually claimed that he was God, and if such a claim is justified and valid, I would let the readers draw their own conclusions.

According to the Vedic scriptures great sages or yogis who

have truly surrendered to and finally attained God realization, in that exulted state they may say I know God, I see Him, and I experience Him. This is more than mere book knowledge or parroted recitation but this is true knowing of God, the personal experience of a yogi or a true sage—this is true *darshana*¹ of God. Such sages are true gurus and act like spokespersons for God, but they do not become God. If any such sage claims that he/she is same as God or is the last or the only spokesperson for God, then it is his/her folly and vanity. A true sage or yogi may state as follows:

*Veda aham aytam purusham mahāntam ādityavarnam
tamasah parastāt.*

*Tameva viditvā ati mrityumayti na anyah panthā vidyatay
ayanāya.* (Yajur Veda 31: 18)

<i>Veda aham</i>	<i>aytam purusham</i>	<i>mahāntam</i>	<i>ādityavarnam</i>
I know	God, the Supreme Being, who is Perfection,	who is Greater than the greatest,	who is Supreme Light and Pure Radiance,

tamasah parastāt.

where there is no
darkness or ignorance.

Tameva viditvā

By knowing Him Alone,

ati mrityumayti

one overcomes
misery and death
and finds bliss

na anyah

there is no other

panthā vidyatay

path known

ayanāya.

to find moksha or bliss.

God is the Supreme Being who is Perfect in every manner and has no deficiencies or shortcomings (also see pages # 29–34 explanations of Mantras # 1 and 2). He is Greater than the greatest, and He Alone is Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient

¹ The Sanskrit word *darshana* means seeing, vision or truly experiencing God. In contrast to true *darshana* described in the text above, many Hindu temple priests have corrupted the word *darshana* by showing *moortis*—icons of deities to the devotees after elaborate rituals and ceremony as the equivalent of their *darshana* of God.

and Omnipotent. God is the Supreme Light that enlightens the soul from within. God is the Pure Radiance in whose presence there is no darkness or ignorance and a person can find the right path to follow in life. God is the Final Shelter of all. God is Guru of all gurus (Patanjali Yoga Darshanam 1: 26) i.e. Teacher of all spiritual teachers.

In the second line of the mantra the sage who knows God goes on to state that by knowing God alone, one overcomes misery and unhappiness in life. The word *mrityum* in Vedic Sanskrit stands both for death of the physical body as well as misery or unhappiness in life. People usually think that they can overcome unhappiness or misery in life by acquiring wealth and worldly goods or pleasures. However, as stated earlier on pages # 32–34 if worldly goods could give lasting happiness, the super-wealthy of the world would be the happiest persons but they are not. The mantra ends by stating there is no other path to accomplish bliss except through meditation and total surrender to God and truly knowing Him (not alleged incarnations). Lasting happiness or joy—bliss comes only from God and while it requires persistent effort, it does not require wealth because it is available free. The sage is a guide to help find bliss but unlike God, he is not Supreme Bliss. True sages promote God and not themselves.

In the Vedic scriptures, even advanced yogis are advised to always guard against vanity and to refrain from ever claiming that they are God or special messengers of God. According to the Vedic scriptures the cardinal sins are lying (*asatya* or untruth), lust, morbid affection (blind attachment to others and material objects), greed, anger, envy and vanity. Many yogis who have conquered lust, morbid affection, greed, anger and envy still have trouble conquering vanity because they think they are more devoted to God and holier than others and/or are exempt from moral rules that apply to ordinary other human beings. The following mantra is a reminder to help them stay away from vanity:

Nämäni tay shatkrato vishväbhih geerbhih eemahay.

Indra abhimätishähayay. (Rig Veda 3: 37: 3)

<i>Shatkrato</i>	<i>eemahay</i>	<i>tay nämäni</i>
God, You have hundreds of Attributes, Capabilities and Works,	I meditate	on Your many names and attributes

<i>vishväbhih geerbhih.</i>	<i>Indra</i>	<i>abhimätishähayay.</i>
in many different words and ways (spoken and unspoken).	O! Master of all wealth, King of all kings and Universal Benefactor,	help me defeat the enemy that is pride and vanity.

This mantra says that the way to overcome vanity is to remember God at all times in words and other ways. It is important to always remember that it is God who is the Master of the universe and whose capabilities are endless. God is the One to whom we should pray and meditate. If we always remember this, then there is no reason for us to become vain of our limited abilities. The mantra ends by stating ‘Dear God, You are the Universal Benefactor. Please help me from ever becoming vain by defeating this internal mental enemy that is vanity’.

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Pope John Paul II during his 26 years of papacy made some effort to promote interfaith dialogue, yet in the year 2000 he along with Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) proclaimed that Christianity especially Catholicism is superior to other religions in reaching God. Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 stated that Catholic Church is the only true church, reinforcing his belief that Catholicism is superior to other religions. Such proclamations do not promote true interfaith dialogue especially because in others’ opinions there are no rational or valid justifications for such statements. Are there sound reasons for such a profound claim or are they the self-aggrandized pronouncements of

the autocratic leadership of the Church? It is important to discuss this issue because such exclusive claims of superiority breed divisiveness and hatred instead of respect for others or brotherly love among people of the world. I have asked my Christian relatives and friends on several occasions that when they critically look at the descriptions of God in the Bible as well as the tenets of Christianity, do they believe them to be based on reason and faith, or blind faith. Many of them (not all) often become defensive or evade the issue.

Let me start with the question of Virgin Birth and God directly fathering Jesus. If a wife or a daughter of any one of us (or that of a friend), ever were to claim that she was pregnant by God, would we believe her? If not, then why would we not? If this could happen 2000 years ago, why can it not happen now? God is Omnipotent, therefore, He can father a son or daughter whenever or wherever He may want to. If Christians can believe that God fathered Jesus, then they should have no difficulty with the Hindus' belief of God incarnating as Rama or Krishna (see above pages # 152–156) millennia before Christ, rather than claiming Christ as the only begotten Son of God on earth even though in the Genesis, the Old Testament describes other 'God's sons' (Genesis 6:2) which apparently were created and not begotten. As stated earlier, I do not agree with most Hindus regarding the concept of God's incarnation as Krishna, just the way I disagree with the concept of Virgin birth or God directly fathering Jesus. In the Vedas God is called our Ultimate Father and Mother, as well as Constant Friend and Companion (see pages 111–112) but this is at the spiritual level and does not mean He directly (physically) incarnates as human beings or fathers children, such acts would be against His attributes (see pages # 29–81). The thoughtful considerations of the Fellows of 'The Jesus Seminar' published in *The Acts of Jesus: The search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*, concluded, 'Jesus was not born of

a virgin; the Fellows doubt that Mary conceived Jesus without sexual intercourse¹.

Christians believe that Christ during his life time performed many miracles. For example, I cite the miracle of 'Jesus feeds five thousand' (Mathew 14: 15–21, Mark 6: 35–44). Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and asked God's blessing on the food. Breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread and fish to the disciples to give to the people. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they picked up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish. Five thousand men had eaten from those five loaves! (Mark 6: 41–44). Later Jesus repeats a similar miracle by feeding four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fish (Mathew 15: 32–38; Mark 8: 1–9). A similar miracle is cited in the Hindu religion in the epic *Mahabharata*. After the five Pandava Princes were banished to the forest for 13 years, the question arose as to how they were to feed themselves and the persons who had accompanied them. The eldest prince Yudhishtira who was considered the personification of dharma—truth and virtue, meditated with intense concentration and as a boon was granted a copper vessel that whenever he or his wife needed food, all they need do was pray for food and the vessel became full of food (*Mahabharata: Vana Parva*—Forest Banishment Section). Many Christians have no trouble believing 'the food miracles' performed by Jesus but have trouble believing equally fantastic miraculous beliefs of other religions. The truth, however, is that even Omnipotent God follows laws of material science and does not and cannot perform such 'food miracles'. A belief in such unbelievable food miracles as true events does not inspire much confidence except as blind faith or magic. The thoughtful considerations of the Fellows of 'The Jesus Seminar'

1 Funk RW and Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*, published by Harper SanFrancisco 1998, in concluding Chapter, What do we really know about Jesus, pp 527–534.

published in *The Acts of Jesus: The search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*, concluded, that the alleged Jesus miracles did not happen and are myths.

Next let us deal with the question of Jesus rising from the dead? Medically, if one is dead, then one is dead; there is no question of physical resurrection. A corpse can not be resuscitated. If one were to resurrect then he/she was really not dead, only erroneously pronounced dead. It is true that under some yogic states and under the influence of some special drugs, people may appear to be dead and also may be pronounced dead, but actually are not dead. Therefore, it is likely that either Jesus did not die on the Cross, or if he did die on the Cross then resurrection is a metaphor for his constant (almost alive) remembrance among his grieving disciples. In grieving state, people sometimes see visions of the departed person, but this does not mean physical resurrection of a dead person. The question whether 'The Resurrection' should be accepted as a historical event or considered a metaphorical description has been raised since the beginning of Christianity. Elaine Pagel methodically discusses this issue in her two books, *The Gnostic Gospels* and *Beyond Belief*. The early Church authorities (in the 1st two centuries of CE) beginning with John and his followers with the orthodox position unambiguously stated that Christ rose bodily (in flesh) from the grave and its defenders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and others insisted that it must be believed even if some other followers of Christ consider it unbelievable, and anybody who denies it is heretic and not a Christian. The other followers of Christ in the 1st two centuries of CE, however, considered resurrection a metaphor for a spiritual experience and not a physical event (see the Gospel of Phillip and Gospel of Thomas). The latter group was later labeled the 'Gnostic' Christians. The orthodox and papal authorities beginning in the 4th century, systematically so suppressed the alternate views that

it is only in the past 100 years, especially since the discovery of *Nag Hamadi* manuscripts, the alternate views are being openly discussed again. Similar to the orthodox and papal authorities, in the 19th and 20th centuries, Chesterton in *The Everlasting Man* and CS Lewis in *Mere Christianity* respectively using arguments similar to Irenaeus and Tertullian have implied that because Christ's claims of being God is so unusual, as also are the beliefs in the physical resurrection or the virgin birth so unbelievable that they must have been real and should be believed. Should one believe in an unbelievable event as argued by the Church authorities, Tertullian, Chesterton or CS Lewis respectively? This is an important question to answer. While one should respect the experience of the apostles recorded by their followers in the New Testament, nevertheless arguments set forth by Irenaeus, Tertullian, Chesterton and CS Lewis for unquestioned belief in that experience are illogical. These arguments are tantamount to the statement that repetition of 'flowers grow in sky' over and over again by a group of people makes it so, as though 'hundred lies can make it the truth.' Tom Harpur in his book *The Pagan Christ* states that taking Gospels literally as 'true history' is continuing to propagate a myth. Also, the misdirected focus on 'true history' by the church authorities and evangelists misses the symbolic message of the Gospels in that God is All Loving and resides in everyone's soul; it is God one needs to find within the soul and connect with and not a belief in the literal dogma.

Any belief that defies reason or common sense must generate skepticism, and be discarded if in the final analysis it seems illogical (see below discussion on Faith, Reason and Devotion to God pages # 176–181). We may not fully understand God but God is not a magician. His omnipotence does not mean that He can do whatever He feels like; His omnipotence does not mean that He incarnates in Human form, or makes corpses physically alive

again. Even God follows the universal rules He established for material science (see pages # 72–74 for details on Omnipotence).

Christians claim that Christ died for mankind's sins? How can this ever be logically possible? Anybody who is born must eventually die either a natural death or at the hands of others. God judges us as individuals based on our deeds (karmas) and not based on others' deeds. In God's judgment, as you sow, so shall you reap, not others. Indirectly, of course dependent family members may share the good or bad consequences of a person's actions, just the way common public may share good or bad consequences of a ruler's decision. Throughout mankind's history, extraordinary sages and saintly persons have lived and died for spiritual and altruistic causes in a selfless manner for the spiritual and/or physical well being of others. **They do not die for others' sins but for the uplifting of others.** Christ died because he tried to spiritually uplift ordinary Jews towards devotion to God and away from the rituals but in the process enraged both the Jewish Temple as well as the Roman authorities. Many other holy persons in the world have chosen similar paths knowing full well that the result may be persecution or even death. But when one believes that God is one's true Protector and Friend—*Mitra*, Spiritual Father—*Pita* as well as Spiritual Mother—*Mata* (see pages # 111–112), that person has no fears because at the most he/she would shed the physical body but the soul would gain the companionship of God. Also, does the Omnipotent God who is supposed to be able to do everything, had to be born in flesh as Christ to atone for mankind's sins? Why could God not directly forgive mankind's sins rather than go through the tortuous process of being born?

Next let us deal with the question that one can achieve salvation only through Christ (John 14: 6, the other three canonical Gospels to the best of my knowledge do not claim this exclusivity). Does this mean all human beings, even sages

and those who were exceptionally good but were born before Christ's birth e.g. Rama, Krishna, Abraham, Moses, Buddha went to hell? Also, all exceptionally good people e.g. Mahatma Gandhi born following Christ's birth, who did not believe in Christ's divinity or Christ as the only path to God, went to hell. On the other hand, serial killers or others persons who have committed heinous crimes most of their life but in the last days of their life accept Christ as their savior will be forgiven and go to heaven. In the eyes of many Non-Christians, such exclusive claims for salvation by many Christians make a mockery of God's justice. Moreover, such claims only generate animosity or hatred between Christians and Non-Christians. Does it occur to my Christian brothers and sisters that contrary to their belief, God may not be exclusive and does not need intermediaries to reach Him because one can directly reach God within one's soul? Why limit God who is limitless? Vedic Dharma followers believe that if you have true faith in and devotion to God, and can achieve total surrender to God, God will offer His grace directly. It may be worthwhile for Christians to consider paying heed to what the Gospel of Thomas says: Saying # 3, Jesus says 'the Kingdom is within you and it is outside of you' and in Saying # 113 Jesus says 'the Kingdom of the Father is already spread out on the earth, and people aren't aware of it.' We need holy teachers to guide us along the path to God, and such teachers are born periodically all over the world whenever and wherever God sees the need. This has happened in the past and would happen in the future.

Lastly, if Christ were God, why while dying on the Cross, according to both Mathew and Mark stated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Mathew 28: 46; Mark 25: 34)?" Did at that moment Christ forget that he is God himself or had he temporarily lost faith in God and became fearful of his imminent death? Or, was Christ play acting his human role? According to the Vedic traditions a person who has totally surrendered himself

(herself) to God would only state, ‘God, Thy will be done’ or as stated by Luke, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23: 46)”. Such persons are able to make these statements because they have lost all fear of death, for God is their constant companion and they have full faith in God’s judgment. I raised the above the question of, Jesus play acting his human role, because a similar question is asked by many Hindus regarding Rama (Lord Rama). In the epic *Ramayana*, which Hindus believe to be their ancient history, after Rama’s wife Sita was abducted to Lanka by the evil-king Ravana, Rama was grieving immensely. He with the help of others had to search for Sita far and wide, before she was finally located. Many Hindus have asked Hindu scholars who believe in Rama’s divinity and call him Lord Rama that if Rama was an incarnation of God, he should have automatically known where Sita was, why the grieving and the search? The usual reply has been, “Rama, being God’s incarnation, actually knew where Sita was but he was playing his human role and acted as if he did not know where Sita was.” I personally believe saintly persons such as Rama or Jesus would never be pretenders or play acting for their followers because this would make them liars. I have been told both by my Hindu and Christian relatives and friends that you have to accept many of these beliefs on faith and should not argue about such beliefs based on logic or reason. However, as you will note below faith must be based on truth and reason and not because the categorical statements in the scriptures were made a long time ago, thus insulating them from scrutiny forever.

The New Testament in some verses clearly states Christ is God, but in other verses Christ clearly differentiates himself from God by calling Father greater than himself. In John 10: 30 Jesus states, “I and Father are one”. On the other hand at other places Jesus states, “The Father is greater than I (John 14: 28)”; “Why do you call me good? Only God is truly good (Luke 18: 19)”; “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will

happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows (Mark 13: 32)". As stated above, Christ while dying on the Cross differentiates himself from God (Mathew 28: 46; Mark 25: 34; Luke 23: 46). Moreover, in several other places Christ prays to God—the Father and/or asks for God's support (Mathew 6: 9). I do not believe that a great sage like Christ as mentioned above in the case of Krishna page # 156 and as implied in the Gospel of Thomas called himself or would have called himself God. I believe that Apostle John and others such as Irenaeus, in order to glorify Christ's greatness and to propagate Christian religion, stated Jesus is same as the Creator God. This belief was later codified in the Nicene Creed, 'We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible or invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Light from Light, true God from true God,.....and the Holy Ghost.' Thereafter, God in Christianity instead of being only One became a Triune; an anthropomorphic God in Heaven who sits on a Throne, God as Universal Spirit i.e. the Holy Ghost, and God as His incarnation Jesus Christ. Also, Christians instead of being monotheistic have actually become tritheistic. In my view, as discussed above in the context of Krishna (page # 156), anybody born as a human being who claims that he or she is same as God would be wrong. Whether Christ himself actually claimed that he was God, and if such a claim is justified and valid, I would let the readers draw their own conclusions.

Although, the Christian missionaries as well as the media in the Western countries, usually portray the Christian faith as monotheistic and Hindu religion as polytheistic, yet it is almost never mentioned that the Hindu religion at its core is a monotheistic religion with One and only One God. Also, same prayer mantras from the Vedas are still sung to the same One God in a continuing tradition that is older than any other religion. The emphasis of both the missionaries and media has been

highly selective with the focus upon the superficial rituals of the Hindu religion, such as the worship of *moortis*—icons of various devas—gods and goddesses. However, it is overlooked that most Christians all over the world pray before the statues or icons (idols) of Christ or Mary and other saints and often light candles and bring offerings. This is not any different from the average Hindu praying before images of various Hindu deities. Hindus have same reverence for their *moortis*—icons as do Christians for icons, statues or pictures of Christ, Mary, other Christian saints or the Cross. As Hindus watch Christian religious processions in various countries featuring icons of various saints or the Virgin Mary, they often regard it to be similar to processions in India where icons or other representations of Durga, Kali or Ganesha are displayed. Hindus question that if in Christianity God can be a ‘Triune’ why can God not be ‘Triune on more than one occasion’ as believed by them (please note the author of this book as explained throughout this book believes in One God who is indivisible, always remains A Unity and never becomes a Triune). With so many similarities, it has been difficult for Hindus to understand why Christian missionaries, like the Pope, claim Christianity especially Catholicism superior to other religions. Hindus wonder what fundamental truths Christianity offers that other religions do not, especially because many of the beliefs and practices of Catholicism have so many similarities to Hindu practices.

Lest the reader of the book think that I am being overly critical of Christianity, I have a great deal of reverence for many of Christ’s teachings just as I do for the many teachings of Krishna as well as those of the founders and/or prophets of other major religions. Christ gave his followers an inspiring moral philosophy but so have the founders, teachers and scriptures of other religions. However, if exclusive claims of superiority are made on behalf of any religion, then those claims should be able

to withstand open and honest scrutiny of their basic foundations.

Christian missionaries from Western countries, when they go to poorer countries to convert others to Christianity have often used financial/material incentives as well as promotion of the idea that economic prosperity comes by becoming Christian. The extraordinary scientific and economic success the West has enjoyed in the past 500 years, however, has a lot to do with the promotion of the rights of the individual and individual liberty, promotion of education especially secular education, promotion of scientific inquiry, reason, logic, truth and hard work rather than religious dogma. In contrast, the Dark Ages of Europe were the consequence of the Catholic Church's demand upon doctrinaire obedience rather than the search for truth. As late as, the beginning of 17th Century Copernicus was denounced as dangerous to the Catholic faith and Galileo was put under house arrest for stating that earth revolved around the sun rather than accepting the Church's stand that sun revolved around the earth. The success of the West, contrary to the missionaries or Pope's view, has a lot to do with the ability of the public to question authority, the separation of the powers of the state and the church, the breakdown of the church's stranglehold over the state and society, and finally the acceptance of scientific truth rather than church's false dogmas e.g. the public finally accepting the truth that the earth is round, not flat, and it revolves around the sun rather than the Church's teaching that sun revolves around the earth. Many of the present generation of fundamentalists and evangelists, however, would like to reverse the clock a few hundred years and make their followers again believe in the literal translations and miracles of the Old and the New Testament.

ISLAM

Muslims, like Christians, believe Islam to be the only true religion. All faiths that believe in God would agree to important tenets of Islam such as *Allah O' Akbar* i.e. God is Great and that God is Compassionate and Merciful. However, non-muslims find Muslim's claim that Muhammad was the latest of the prophets and the last prophet¹ that was ever to be (as believed by the Sunni and Shia factions—the main factions of Islam), or that Quran is the final and infallible revelation of God's will, as limiting God's authority. If Muhammad was indeed the last prophet that was ever to be, then did Omniscient and Omnipotent God make a mistake by shortchanging all people born before Muhammad by giving them limited spiritual knowledge? Also, if God gives knowledge to mankind in a progressive evolutionary manner i.e. each subsequent prophet is more knowledgeable than the previous one (Muhammad > Jesus > Moses > Abraham > Adam), then, has the Omnipotent and Omniscient God's ability to progressively enlighten human beings been permanently frozen after Muhammad? Is the search for the God's truth in the 21st century misguided and futile everywhere except in the Quran? As stated earlier, Almighty God's abilities are endless and whenever God sees the need, He sends holy teachers or sages to guide people, and will also keep on doing so in the future, irrespective of what the Muslims may claim.

¹ Please note that the Shia faction of Islam believes in a lineage of imams who are direct descendents of Prophet Muhammad and his true successors, and that only a living scholar must be followed for guidance. The Shia also believe that imam Mahdi, the 12th original imam is still alive as a 'Hidden Imam' and guiding the current hierarchy of imams and will reappear when the circumstances are suitable. The Sunnis in contrast do not believe in the hierarchy of imams and have different religious practices. Some Sunni leaders consider Shia to be kafirs (infidels). Clearly there is considerable difference in how Islam is practiced by its two major factions Sunnis and Shias not unlike Catholics and Protestants.

What authenticates the Quran as the final and infallible revelation of God's will and Muhammad as the last prophet? On one hand, the Quran confirms some aspects of the Old and the New Testament by stating that God revealed His will to the Jews and Christians through various prophets but on the other hand it accuses Jews of disobeying God by corrupting the scriptures and accuses Christians of worshipping Jesus as son of God rather than God himself even though He (God) commanded all of them to worship none but Him (Surah 5: 12–18). Quran states that Muhammad is God's messenger (Surah 3: 144 and 5: 19) and according to Muslims his purpose was to rectify the scriptures back to the truth previously disclosed to Abraham. Muslims claim that because Quran is the final and infallible revelation of God's will (Surah 18: 27, 32: 1 and 98: 1–5), therefore, Sunni Muslims believe Muhammad is the last prophet. In the 21st century if a charismatic person were to claim that God revealed to him the statement that 'Muhammad was the last prophet that was ever to be' is erroneous and in fact he is the next prophet, would we especially the Muslim believe him? If not, then why would we not? If this could happen 1300 years ago, why can it not happen now? God is Omnipotent—God has power over all things (Surah 5: 17–19), therefore, He can do whatever He wants and certainly send another prophet to earth. Despite the passage of time are God's abilities to remain permanently subordinate to what He is said to have revealed to Muhammad via angel Gabriel a longtime ago? Baha'u'llah 'the founder of Bahai faith declared himself a prophet and his followers consider him a prophet. Most Muslims, however, consider Baha'u'llah a false prophet and Bahais have often been persecuted in Muslim countries. Why do Muslims consider that Bahais' claim about Baha'u'llah less valid than their own claim about Muhammad? Similarly, Mormons believe that the Book of Mormon to be the, "most correct of any book on the earth" because it was revealed by God to Prophet Joseph Smith

relatively more recently (150 years ago). Are Mormon claims of infallibility of Book of Mormon any less valid than those of Muslims about Quran?

Muhammad by all accounts was both a very able religious leader and an administrator who united various Arabian tribes that were often involved in intertribal warfare. He directed them away from idol worship of various gods to the worship of One God. However, in the eyes of Non-Muslims that does not make Muhammad the last prophet. Persons belonging to other faiths find God's messenger Muhammad to have similar characteristics to those of sages, prophets or 'special messengers of God' born in other parts of the world, before or after Muhammad. Most Muslims on the other hand do not consider or accept that people of other faiths, who believe in God but not in Muhammad as the last prophet as true or faithful believers in God. Has a belief in Muhammad's revelation about God, become more important to Muslims than God Himself? As previously discussed in the case of Krishna (page # 156) or Christ (page # 167) that if either of them actually claimed that 'I am God', then they would be wrong. Similarly, Muslim's claim that Muhammad is God's last Prophet, and the Quran is the infallible message of God recited through him, whether such a claim is justified and valid, I would let the readers draw their own conclusions.

Muslims believe that God can not be represented by an icon or an idol. This belief, on the part many Muslims, has led to a vehement stand against any idols, icons or statues e.g. the recent destruction of the Giant Buddhas in Afghanistan by the *Taliban*. While a belief that God can not be represented by an icon or an idol is very laudable in my view, yet Hindus and others wonder why Muslims themselves go to Mecca to circle the Kaaba and consider it one of the main pillars of Islam. Is circling *Kaaba* and kissing or pointing to the black sacred stone in the eastern corner not worshipping a building or stone instead of God? In the eyes

of many Non-Muslims, the Muslims have merely replaced the images of Hindu deities, Christ and Christian saints, with the Kaaba building and the sacred stone for reverence. Furthermore, many Muslims bring offerings at the shrines of Muslim Holy-men in India in the same tradition as Hindus bring offerings at the temples or Christians light votive candles in the churches. Are such Muslims not true Muslims? God judges people by their deeds and not whether they prayed in a mosque, church, Hindu temple, Jewish synagogue, or they visited holy places and/or shrines and brought offerings. Following the recent 'Muhammad Cartoon' episode in the Danish press, there were vociferous condemnations in most Muslim countries along with occasional violent protests. I personally deplore mocking of any religious leader or symbol. Muslims have very high reverence for their founder Muhammad and most of them rightly found the cartoons offensive. However, where was the vociferous condemnation in the Muslim countries when the Giant Buddhas in Afghanistan were destroyed with canons; Buddhists have the same reverence for their founder Buddha as Muslims have for Muhammad.

During his lifetime prophet Muhammad generally discouraged belief in miracles while calling the Quran itself a miracle. The Quran, however, authenticates and perpetuates the miracles of the Old Testament such as, 'When Moses requested water for his people We said to him: Strike the rock with your staff. Thereupon twelve springs gushed from the Rock, and' (Surah 2: 60). Similarly, the Quran recognizes the miraculous birth of Christ from a virgin mother by stating that Mary was made pregnant by God's spirit (Surah 19: 13-37). Many adherents of Islam believe that Muhammad in flesh, riding on a winged white steed named al-Buraq and guided by angel Gabriel, went to visit God in the Seventh Heaven (see Seyyed Nasr and Huston Smith in the bibliography section). In the physical world, it is light that travels the fastest because the speed of light is 186,000

miles (nearly 300,000 kilometer) per second. If we allot 10 hours for the *Night Journey* with 5 hours for each way travel, and if the winged steed could travel at the speed of light as well as overcome all the 'Gravitational forces' without being killed in the process, the farthest the steed would have made in 5 hours would be 3,348,000,000 miles, approximately three and a half billion miles. The closest star to our sun is Alpha Centauri star system (because they are actually three stars close to each other) and it is approximately 25,600 billion miles (4.36 *light years*) away from the earth making it 7,600 times further away than the winged steed would have traveled (which as stated above at the maximum would be 5 *light hours* away). Does this make the Seventh Heaven (and possibly hell also) located somewhere between the sun and Alpha Centauri, albeit a lot closer to the sun? Is this the place from where God rules the rest of the Milky-way galaxy as well as other far away billions of galaxies? Are there other heavens that exist in other galaxies and does God periodically visit them or is He permanently stationed on the Throne in the Seventh Heaven? Moreover, it is stated that in the heaven Muhammad negotiated with God that Muslims were to pray five times daily instead of God's initial command of prayer 50 times daily (see Huston Smith). Does God barter His commands with mortals or prophets?

In the Quran it is stated in numerous places that God is stationed on the Throne in the Heaven, however, at least in one place the Quran also states that God is Omnipresent (Surrah 2: 115). To God belongs the East and the West. Whichever way you turn is the face of God. He is omnipresent and all-knowing. This raises the question that if God is omnipresent, why did He need the help of angel Gabriel to relay His message of Quran to Muhammad, why could He not directly reveal the message to Muhammad? Is *Night Journey* the only occasion God directly communicated with Muhammad? Also, since the revelation

of the Quran has God never directly communicated with any Muslim? The Quran states that God hears and sees everything (Surah 17: 1). Does God directly hear the prayers of the faithful Muslims five times a day or does He use angels or other messengers to bring Him the prayers? If God uses angels or other messengers to bring Him the prayers, this belief of Muslims, while in many ways similar to the beliefs of Christians and Hindus which describe the need of an intermediary, would be in sharp contrast to the teachings of Vedic scriptures which state that Omnipresent God residing inside everyone's soul, directly communicates with everybody without the need of intermediaries.

Lastly, Non-Muslims find the sanctioning of killing of innocent non-muslims (kafirs) in the name of Allah (advocated by many fundamentalist Muslims) as totally misguided. While many Muslim rulers and leaders over the past thirteen centuries have been enlightened and tolerant of others' beliefs, many others were intolerant of other religions and used all types of measures including violence to forcibly convert others to Islam and destroyed temples or houses of worship of other religions. Practices like those of the *Taliban* and other fundamentalist Muslims will bring only oppression and regression and neither freedom nor progress in the society, as well as keep God far away. God, the Merciful protects truth seekers and those who promote genuine welfare of others, and punishes those who in His name promote violence.

EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Both Christianity and Islam are exclusive religions with their founders Christ or Muhammad respectively (or their teachings) believed as the only path to reach God or find salvation. This condones the calling of a Non-Christian by a Christian, an infi-

del, heathen or pagan; or the calling of a Non-Muslim by a Muslim, a *kafir* (an infidel). Christ is as essential to the Christian faith as Muhammad is to Islam. If either Christ or Muhammad were excluded, the respective religions would be hardly recognizable, but God will still exist. Therefore, Hindus abhor the claims of superiority by both Christianity and Islam, because they find no truth or valid reasoning for such claims. Vedic Dharma recognizes that God may be called by different names but is nevertheless same One God and He alone should be the goal of life—not the intermediaries. Moreover, there is more than one way to reach Him, whether it is meditation, true devotion, acquiring spiritual knowledge, doing selfless good deeds in the service of God and others, or a varying combination of all these ways.

According to Vedic scriptures, God whenever and wherever sees the need to guide human beings along the right path, sends holy teachers and they are born periodically all over the world. Throughout mankind's history extraordinary sages and saintly persons have lived and died to promote God and have served and toiled in a selfless manner for the spiritual and/or physical well being of others. This has happened in the past and would happen in the future. God's ability to send sages or holy teachers in the future has not been permanently abolished.

TRUE FAITH, REASON AND DEVOTION TO GOD

The closest word to 'Faith in God' in Vedic scriptures is *Shradha* (Rig Veda 10: 151: 4 and 5). The Sanskrit word *shradha* usually implies a deep abiding faith in God coupled with ceaseless devotion to God. The literal translation of *shradha* is based upon its root words *shrat* (truth) and *dha* (adopt into the fabric of one's life). Therefore, *shradha* means adopting and following truth in all aspects of one's life at all times. This idea contains

the implication that faith in and devotion to God must always be based upon truth and valid logic or reasoning. Albert Einstein said that ‘religion without science is blind’. Blind faith in one’s own religion and intolerance for other’s beliefs produces fundamentalists and bigots in every religion, whereas faith in truth, reason and tolerance of others produces humility, love, respect and brotherhood (sisterhood) among people of the world. Lastly, faith in God is truly exercised in the act of virtuous and devotional living and not in blindly believing dogmas or rote rituals. There is no place in *Shradha* for blind faith or blind devotion to the teachings of any guru, messiah, prophet, or teacher. God does not exempt sages or prophets either from the universal laws of material science, or from truth and personal integrity. God does not declare special religious decrees for the sole benefit of various gurus, messiahs, prophets, or sages, which do not apply to ordinary mortals.

One of the Veda mantra states the following regarding shraddha i.e. faith and devotion:

Drishtavä roopay vayakarot satya anratay prajāpati,

Ashradhäm anratay dadhät shraddham satyay prajāpati.

(Yajur Veda 19: 77)

<i>Prajāpati</i>	<i>drishtavä roopay</i>	<i>vayakarot</i>
God who is Master of all persons and also dwells inside the soul	has clearly shown	and separated

<i>satya</i>	<i>anratay.</i>	<i>Prajāpati</i>	<i>ashradhäm anratay dadhät</i>
truth	from untruth or lies.	God, Master of all	persons has created natural or spontaneous doubt and skepticism in untruth,

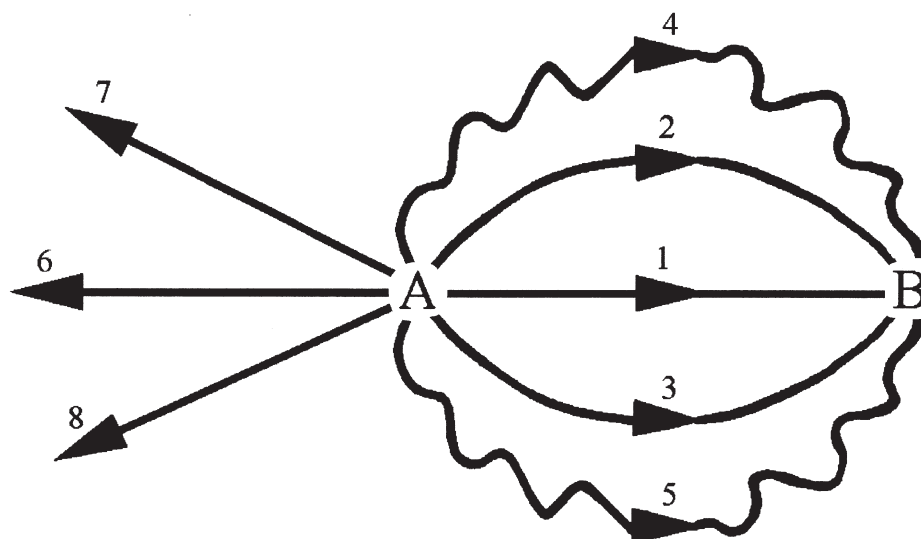
shraddham satyay.

and has created natural or spontaneous
trust, faith and devotion in truth.

This mantra says that God who is the Master of all persons has clearly separated truth from untruth and lies. Whereas, God has created natural and spontaneous trust, faith and devotion in truth; in contrast He has created doubt, skepticism and aversion to untruth and lies. One may wonder, why then do we frequently encounter untruth or lies in the world. Nobody is attracted to lies knowingly, however, due to greed, ignorance and laziness we are often led astray, deceived by the promises of easy fulfillment of our desires or removal of our fears. Whereas, truth always stands on its merits, for the religious untruths or lies to succeed, they need to be propped up by twisted explanations, fear provoking proclamations or exhortations of various religions and their preachers, the promises of great heavenly rewards, and finally by the pretence of truth. These props are the means by which various religious authorities, throughout mankind's history, have succeeded in promoting distorted faith and devotion and have led common people away from their God given natural and spontaneous doubt and skepticism towards falsehoods.

When someone searching for spiritual enlightenment encounters a new or an old religious path, it behooves him to carefully examine just exactly what is being offered. Does the offer consist of some truths along with unbelievable dogmas as well as religious rigidity, or the offer consists of spiritual openness and freedom which will help a person gradually accomplish universal truths on one's own? She/he should then make a sound decision, based on the inner voice of truth and reason, rather than false "spiritual rapture." A spiritual path that offers the most positive reward even though it may require greater personal effort to succeed is the best choice. While embarking on a particular path, a wise person will follow the component(s) that appears true with faith and devotion and discard what is unbelievable, never losing his/her common sense. It is important to use reason and prudent judgment in spiritual decisions as it

is in all other decisions in this life. In this regard, one might act like the honeybee that carefully selects the blossom from which to get its nectar, rather than behave like a housefly that would just as well alight upon garbage or dung as food.



Consider the above pictorial representation: In going from point A to point B in this scheme, there is only one path that is the shortest, and that is path # 1, which is a straight line. Paths # 2, # 3, # 4 and # 5 are longer and more circuitous than path # 1, but they do eventually reach point B. Paths # 6, # 7 and # 8, however, would actually lead someone at point A in the opposite direction from point B. This can be compared to many religious paths as well; some are direct while others are circuitous. And some so-called religions might actually move one away from God, towards misery and unhappiness. All religions believe in universal truths such as honesty, integrity, kindness, compassion, charity and being helpful as well as respectful of others. Incorporating these beliefs in the fabric of one's life is like following path # 1, a straight path towards God. However, continuing to have faith in fantastic claims of any religion that may have had some temporal or historic significance in the past, but defy logic and common sense, takes one away from God. Therefore, one must exercise caution in what one believes in and whose teachings one follows.

There have been many religious leaders in the past and there are many now that appear to be holy and charismatic but actually are spiritual frauds or religious charlatans, preaching easy, painless or misdirected solutions that gullible people may find attractive. Such “leaders, holy teachers, gurus” promote blind obedience to their teachings and discourage spiritual or intellectual quest, reasoning or introspection. In the process, they often lead their followers astray, far from God, truth, peace or bliss, as in the paths # 6, 7 and 8.

According to the Vedic tradition, a moral virtuous path—*dharma* in life demands that we diligently pursue the truth in our quest of God. The definition of dharma includes: Dhriti (thoughtfulness with patience, courage and strength), *Dhee* (ability to discriminate between right and wrong) and *Satyam* (truth). There is only One God irrespective of what we may call Him and what attributes we may ascribe to Him. He alone is Almighty and the Ultimate Unchangeable Reality in the universe that does not change whether we rightly or wrongly describe Him one way or the other. God is loving, kind and just, and not a vengeful tyrant full of wrath. God resides inside every person’s soul and offers us an opportunity to reach Him and find bliss now in the present. We do not have to wait until after death to meet an anthropomorphic God in the heaven.

The superiority or exclusive claims of all organized religions regarding God and how to reach Him, have a few or many errors and shortcomings. The idea that God favors one religious group or a set of dogmas more than others, because their scriptures or followers claim so, will wrongly make God prejudiced and unjust. God, however, is Just and the Ultimate Truth as well as He sides with the truth and people who follow truth. The fundamentalists of all religions instead of claiming God is on their side, should ask themselves, are they truly on God’s side. We should all learn humility and learn to respect each other without claiming

superiority, let God be the Judge of who is a better human being. In this era of mass and often instant communications, God and His name should be used to unite people of different religions and not used for exploitation or to fight with each other. No organized religion has a monopoly on God or the truth. To make the world a more peaceful place, full of love instead of hate, thoughtful scholars of all faiths should meet together and agree to what are universal truths in all religions and declare them to be a universal religion for all persons in the world based on the principles of truth, common good, happiness, justice, equality and freedom¹. To find common ground, we have to move away from various beliefs based totally on orthodoxy which do not reconcile with, reason or common sense. Also, where we fail to agree, we should acknowledge the differences in various beliefs and respect others' beliefs with tolerance while recognizing the limitations of our own beliefs. Lastly, as individuals we should all exercise our free will and do our best to seek as well as follow God and truth with an open but thoughtful mind.

Satyam Eva Jayatay Na Anritam

(MUNDKOPNISHAD 3: 1: 6).

TRUTH ALWAYS ULTIMATELY PREVAILS, NOT UNTRUTH OR LIES

¹ This sentence has been modified from a similar sentence in a book by Dr. Tulsi Ram, *Swami Dayanand's Vision of Truth*. 2002 Samarpan Shodh Samsthan Ghaziabad, U.P. India pp 195.

APPENDIX

Eight Devotional Songs—Bhajans *Based on the Vedic Dharma*

DEAR GOD, YOU GIVE US LIFE¹

Dear God, You give us life and sustain us with food, water and air,
You alone remove all our sorrows, and give us joy, love and care.

You permeate everything in the universe and its brightness comes from You,
You alone are worthy of worship for peace and bliss only flow from You.

Dear God, we pray to You, please inspire us and be our mind's solace,
Guide us in the right path and teach us love for we all are one human race.

¹ This bhajan is based on the most sung or recited Veda mantra called Gayatri or Guru Mantra “*Om bhur bhuva swaha, tat savituar varenyam bhargo devasaya dhi mahi. Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*”(see page # 43), and Hindi bhajan “*Toonay Hummay utpunn kiya.*”

GOD, YOU ALONE ARE MY MASTER¹

God, You alone are my Master, I seek your shelter for solace,
No one else really listens to me, how else the world, may I face.

Ever since I have forsaken You, endless miseries have been my
fate,
Ashamed am I of my various misdeeds, what else Lord may I
state.

What is done in life is done, for my various misdeeds I repent,
Lord, I promise a fresh start and mend my life not yet spent.

You give blessings to everyone, rich or poor, weak or brave,
Awaken me with your wisdom, so that my soul I may save.

Lord You alone I honor and worship, and You alone I praise,
In your service I do my deeds, grant me your love and grace.

¹ This song is modified from an old Hindi *bhajan* titled, “*Tayray durr ko chhod kurr kis durr jöoon mai.*”

MAY THERE BE LOVE, PEACE AND HOPE IN WORLD'S EVERY PLACE¹

May there be love, peace and hope in world's every place,
Lord, fulfillment of this prayer will occur only by your grace.

Pursuit of truth and doing good deeds in life, may everyone aspire,
With your blessings wisdom, health and wealth may everyone acquire.
May there be love, peace and hope in world's every place.

Prayer and devotion to You may make our minds full of joy every day,
Vanity, greed, lust, envy and hate may flee from all of us very far away.
May there be love, peace and hope in world's every place.

May we always help the poor, meek and weak, to others be respectful and
kind,
Honesty, courage, generosity and your name Lord may always be in our
mind.
May there be love, peace and hope in world's every place.

Living our life in Your service Lord has its own special inner joy and thrill,
Our prayer of universal love and prosperity, God You alone may fulfill.
May there be love, peace and hope in world's every place.

¹ This song is based on a popular Sanskrit prayer “*Sarvay Bhavantu Sukhina Sarvay Santu Niramaya*” and Hindi *bhajan* “*Sukhi basay sansār sab dukhiyā rahay na koye.*” In this song God has been addressed as God and Lord. In the original Hindi *bhajan* God in different lines is variously addressed as *Bhagwān* = One worth worshipping; *Eesha* = Master who fulfills our needs; *Jagdeesh* = Master of the universe; and *Kartār* = Creator.

TO BE WITH YOU GOD AND SEE YOUR GLORY IS MY LIFE'S ONLY DESIRE¹

To be with You God and see Your glory is my life's only desire,
Give me a drink of Your bliss so that in Your service I may retire.

People bring gifts of money and wealth to temples to appease You and gain
fame,
All I have to offer is tears of poor and humble whom I try to serve in Your
name.

World's glittering attractions once so pleasing now only seem dull and lame,
Truth, simplicity, helping others and Lord devotion to You is my life's new aim.

Please be my real Guru and remove the ignorance and darkness of my mind,
Enlighten me with Your knowledge so that peace and bliss in life may I find.

¹ This song has been modified from an old Hindi *bhajan* titled, “*Tumhāray divya darshan ki mai ichhā lay kay āyāh hoon.*”

GOD YOU ALONE ARE OUR ULTIMATE FATHER, MOTHER, HELPER AND FRIEND¹

God, You alone are our Ultimate Father, Mother, Helper and Friend,
When we have none else beside us, You are still there in the end.

We may have forsaken You but You are always there looking after our welfare,
When we finally learn to depend on You we will overcome all our despair.

God You alone are our Ultimate Father, Mother, Helper and Friend.

Endless are your gifts and blessings spread everywhere far and wide,
Warmth from the sun, cool moonlit nights, the breeze and the ocean tide.

God You alone are our Ultimate Father, Mother, Helper and Friend.

Prayer and devotion to You, Lord Almighty be always our life's ultimate aim,
In our minds and on our lips even with last breath, may always be your name.

God You alone are our Ultimate Father, Mother, Helper and Friend.

¹ This song has been modified from two old Hindi *bhajans* titled “*Pitu Matu Sahayak Swāmi Sakhā*” and “*Ishwara tum hee dayā karo tum bin hamārā kaun hai*”

GLORY BE TO GOD, OM JAI JAGDEESH HARAY

Glory be to God, *Om*¹ *jai*² *Jagdeesh*³ *Haray*⁴, Swami jai Jagdeesh Haray,
Dear God in a moment, You make devotees miseries vanish away.
Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh Haray.

Those who meditate find wisdom and their mental worries go away,
They find happiness, health and wealth gradually come their way.
Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh Haray.

You are my ultimate Father and Mother, who else may I seek,
There is none else besides You, to who else I may freely speak.
Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh Haray.

You are the Greatest, your glory the universe everywhere sings,
You *Jagdeesh* are the Ultimate Master, the King of all kings.
Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh Haray.

You are the ocean of kindness, showering everyone with blessings,
Forgive me Your humble servant, Sustainer give me your blessings.
Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh Haray.

You are the Universal Benefactor giving love and care to everyone,
How may I the simple and foolish one, reach You the Eternal One.
Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh Haray.

This song is the most well known devotional bhajan in India. It is called *Ārati*—the hopeful song of one in despair, and is traditionally sung at the end of a prayer service or any auspicious occasion.

1 Om means God who is Universal Protector and Benefactor.

2 Jai means glory, praise and victory. The first four words ‘Glory be to God’ can be substituted by ‘Praise be to God’

3 Jagdeesh means Master of the universe.

4 Haray means One who removes our miseries. Haray is pronounced Her-ray like in Hare Krishna. Swami means God who is the Master.

You comfort the poor and meek for You are the Ultimate Protector,
Extend to me also Your loving hand and grant me your shelter.

Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh, Haray.

Help us remove from ourselves lust, greed, envy and all other sins,
Further our love, devotion to You and service to our fellow beings.

Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh, Haray.

Nothing that I have is mine, everything Lord belongs to You,
Master, give me what I need and let the rest remain with You.

Glory be to God, Om jai Jagdeesh, Haray.

GOD IS GREAT

*Om Kham Braham*¹, *Allah O Akbar*², God is Great,
Dear God, all these prayers, Your Glory they state.

People, who in Your name Lord, promote lies or hate,
They know not Your justice, for misery will be their fate.

Love and caring provide hope, to even the most desperate,
Surrender to You and mending one's life is never too late.

Truth and kindness are the essence of best human trait,
A true believer finds You always as his/her closest mate.

¹ *Om Kham Braham* means God is Great (see page # 86).

² *Allah O Akbar* means God is Great (see page # 170).

OM IS YOUR NAME, GOD, OM IS YOUR NAME

Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name, your name, your name.
People call you by different names, but you are One and the same.
 Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name...

Vedas call you *Eeshwar*—the Master, *Paramatma*—the Supreme Soul,
Agnay—the Ultimate Leader, for You alone make the universe whole.
 Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name...

You are *Varun*—the High and Noble, *Indra*—the King of all kings,
You are *Anant*—the Eternal One, Your glory the universe sings.
 Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name...

The universe is your creation so *Brahma*—the Almighty Creator is your
 name,
Omnipresent preserver—*Vishnu*, and *Rudra*¹—the dissolutioner are also your
 names.
 Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name...

Christians call you Lord and God, Jews *Yahweh* and *Adonai*,
Muslims call you *Allah* or *Khudä*, Hindus *Hari* and *Säinee*.
 Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name...

Dear God You are the Universal Benefactor, Father, Mother and Friend,
You are also Helper, Guide and Protector for your attributes have no end.
 Om is your name, God, *Om* is your name...

¹ Some people call Shiva as the destroyer but in the original Vedic Sanskrit, Shiva means the Benefactor or the Benevolent God who gives us blessings. Instead, Rudra is the name used for God's attribute as the dissolutioner. The word *Hari* in Hindi and Sanskrit means God who removes our sorrows and miseries. *Saainee* in Hindi means God the Master of universe. *Khuda* in Urdu means God who exists by Him-self and is not created.

You remind all of us, rich and poor, strong and weak of our spiritual unity,
Let us make the world full of love and peace, for we all are one humanity.

Om is your name, God, Om is your name...

Om is in you, Om is in me, Om is in him and her, Om exists in everybody,
Songs and chants of your name are the divine sound and universal melody.

Om is your name, God, Om is your name...

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