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Among the Monotheistic
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THE HINDU VIEW OF MONOTHEISM

by

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Intergenerational Support and Well-Being of Older Adults

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Abstract: This study examined the relationship between intergenerational support and well-being of older adults.

Methods: Data were drawn from the Health and Retirement Study, a nationally representative longitudinal survey of older adults.

Results: Findings indicate that intergenerational support is positively related to well-being.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that intergenerational support is an important factor in the well-being of older adults.

Older adults are a growing segment of the population, and their well-being is a major concern for society. One of the ways in which older adults can maintain their well-being is through intergenerational support.

Intergenerational support is the exchange of resources between generations, and it can take many forms, including financial support, emotional support, and practical support.

Research has shown that intergenerational support is positively related to the well-being of older adults. For example, older adults who receive financial support from their children are more likely to be satisfied with their lives.

Similarly, older adults who receive emotional support from their children are more likely to experience positive emotions and less negative emotions.

Practical support, such as help with household chores or transportation, is also positively related to the well-being of older adults.

These findings suggest that intergenerational support is an important factor in the well-being of older adults. Therefore, it is important to encourage and facilitate intergenerational support.

One way to do this is through community programs that provide opportunities for older adults and their families to interact and support each other.

The Hindu View of Monotheism

by

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Asia is the cradle of all the principal religions of the world. Six great religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Confucianism arose in this continent. The first two of these are of Aryan origin and were born in India. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are Semitic religions and were born in Western Asia. Confucianism arose in China about the same time as Buddhism arose in India.

Hinduism was originally known as Arya dharma, the religion of the Aryans, or Vaidika dharma, the religion of the Vedas, the primary scriptures of this religion. It acquired the name Hinduism for historical reasons which may be mentioned here. The Aryan people who came to India in about 3000 B.C. originally settled on the banks of the river Sindhu or Indus and its tributaries. The other branch of the Aryans who were called Iranians after their country Iran which lay to the west of the Sindhu, pronounced the word Sindhu as Hindu. They not only called the river but also the region of its valley as well as the people living there as Hindu. In course of time a slight distinction was made between the names of the country and the people. The country came to be called Hind, a name which became India when it travelled to Europe, while the people continued to be called Hindu. Still later when Islam entered India, the application of the word Hindu was restricted to mean only those

Indians who followed the ancient Aryan religion. The followers of this religion themselves adopted this name and so their religion came to be called Hinduism. Other examples of such semantic changes are not lacking. For instance the word Parsee originally meant a native of ^FPars or Persia but now it has come to mean a follower of Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Persia or Iran.

Before taking up for discussion the Hindu view of monotheism, a brief outline of Hinduism may be given for a better understanding of the subject.

The question that is bound to occur first to a person not familiar^a with this religion is about its founder. In this^I respect Hinduism resembles Judaism rather than Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, for it does not have one founder. Like the Hebrew prophets, the Aryan rishis and avatars gave this religion its scriptures and its code of conduct.

The Vedas which are the prime scriptures of Hinduism are regarded by the Hindus to have been revealed to a number of rishis or seers. Of the two great avatars or incarnationsⁿ of God, Rama by his own example laid down the code of conduct to be followed by the people, and Krishna in his sermon on the battlefield gave to the Hindus the cream of their scriptures. The life of Rama forms the subject of the epic Ramayana and the sermon of Krishna was versified under the name of the Bhag^{av}adgita to form a part of the epic Mahabharata.

Unlike the Semitic religions, each of which has one holy book dealing with all branches of its religious

lore, Hinduism has a number of holy books each dealing with one particular branch of its religious practices and beliefs. The four Vedas, the most ancient of the Hindu scriptures are for the most part books of prayers. The Upanishads, the Brahmasutra and the Bhagavadgita are books of theology and ethics. The chief subjects of the Puranas are the genealogies of ancient kings and rishis and the accounts of creation and dissolution of the universe by God. The Kalpasutras and the Smritis deal with ritual and personal law. Of these the Vedas and the Upanishads are regarded as shruti or revealed books.

Of the cardinal beliefs of Hinduism, the most important is the doctrine of karma or action, and samsara or transmigration of souls. According to Hindu Scriptures the soul is immortal though the body is perishable. A person has to reap the fruits of all his karmas or actions, and if the chain of actions and their fruits is not exhausted in one's life one has to be reborn after death to reap the residual fruits of actions. If the actions are bad a person is born in bad circumstances, but if the actions are good one is rewarded by being born in favourable circumstances.

A person can be freed from the chain of births and deaths by following the three-fold path of jnana or knowledge, karma or action and bhakti or devotion to God. A person can attain moksha or salvation when his or her actions are not only good but also completely free from the taint of selfishness. For this he or she has to acquire spiritual knowledge and repose complete

faith in God.

The last important cardinal belief of Hinduism is the concept of three gunas or qualities. There are three constituent qualities of nature, viz. sattva or goodness, purity and serenity, rajas or passion, energy and activity, and tamas or darkness, inertia, and fury. Although the other two qualities, especially, rajas, can not be completely abjured, the aim of a person should be to approximate to the quality of sattva as far as possible which implies observance of moral principles like satya or truthfulness, asteya or honesty, ahimsa or non-violence, daya or kindness, dana or Charity, kshama or forgiveness, dama or self-control and shaucha or purity of body and mind.

It is necessary to present a detailed analysis of the Hindu concept of God before seeing in which respects it agrees or differs with the strictly monotheistic concept of the three Semitic religions. The germs of Hindu monotheism are found in the Rigveda, the oldest of the Vedas, which in its greater part contains prayers addressed to devas who are mostly personifications of the powers of nature. It was the rishi Dirghatamas, born more than four thousand years ago, to whom the truth contained in a famous verse of the Rigveda was first revealed that there is one Supreme Being whom the sages call by many names. Another verse says that what is one has become this all. A couple of hymns, in which God ~~has been~~^{is} addressed as Vishvakarman or All-maker, call Him our father, our creator and our disposer and regard Him as the one God who created heaven and earth and who has eyes, arms and feet on all sides,

a figurative way of describing God's omniscience and omnipotence. The famous hymn of creation ^{tells} ~~says~~ in beautiful and impressive language that before creation, when there was neither day nor night, neither air nor sky, neither death nor immortality, the One breathed windless by His own power, and it was His desire to create that was the bond between the non-existent and the existent.

^{As} ~~is~~ far as the three entities of the universe, God, souls and matter are concerned, the Rigveda shows their relationship by a beautiful metaphor in this way "Two birds associated together and mutual friends have taken their abode in the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fig, the other that does not eat overlooks all." As understood through the ages, the tree here is symbolic of matter, the bird eating the sweet fig is the soul which has to enjoy the fruit of action, while the Bird that does not eat is God who, being perfect, is not subject to the fruit of action.

It should, however, be remembered that though the conception of the unity of God existed in the period of the Vedas, it could not impress the common man for want of a definite name for the one God. This lacuna was filled by the Upanishads, the Brahmasutra and the Bhagavadgita, which constitute the prasthanas trayi or the triple foundation of Hindu theology. These works unequivocally declared the name of the Supreme Being to be Brahma and also called Him Isha or Ishvara meaning the Lord. The very first verse of the Isha Upanishad says :- "By the Lord is pervaded this all ^{ev} ~~water~~ moving thing is in the moving world".

The Kena Upanishad lays great emphasis on the idea that Brahma and Brahma alone deserves to be worshipped and all the devas are powerless against His wishes. A beautiful parable found in this Upanishad relates how the great devas Agni, Vayu and Indra cannot burn or blow off even a blade of grass without the will of Brahma, and ultimately realize that Brahma is the Supreme Being through whose power alone they enjoy greatness.

A verse of the Katha Upanishad describes the immanence of Brahma: ~~in this way:~~

“There is only one controller of the universe, the inherent spirit of all beings, who turns the uniform matter into many forms. Those wise men who see Him in their heart enjoy eternal bliss not others.”

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the great rishi Yajnavalkya who lived around 1000 B.C. calls Brahma Akshara or Imperishable and in reply to a question by the learned lady Gargi gives a most impressive account of the governance of the universe by the Imperishable Brahma: ~~which is as follows:~~

Verily, O Gargi, at the command of that Imperishable the sun and the moon stand apart. Verily, O Gargi at the command of that Imperishable the earth and the sky stand apart. Verily, O Gargi, at the command of that Imperishable the moments, the hours, the days, the nights, the fortnights, the months, the seasons and the years stand apart. Verily, O Gargi, at the command of that Imperishable some rivers flow from the snowy mountains to the east, others to the west.

God's transcendental nature is often expressed

extract

by paradoxes in the Upanishads. Thus according to the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, "He has hands and feet on every side, so also eyes, head and face. He has ears everywhere in the world and stands encompassing all." And yet "Without feet and hands He moves and grasps. He sees without eyes and hears without ears. He knows whatever is to be known, but Him there is none who knows".

The kindness and love of God for His creation is also emphasised in the Upanishads. Using the metaphor of the Rigveda, both the Mundaka and the Shvetashvatara Upanishads have described the kindness of God in poetic language thus :- "On the selfsame tree a person sunken and deluded grieves for his impotence. When he sees the other, the gracious Lord and His greatness, he becomes freed from sorrow."

Badarayana, who gives a systematic exposition of the teachings of the Upanishads in his Brahmasutra, the most authentic work on the Vedanta system of philosophy defines Brahma in the second sutra of his work thus: "Brahma is the Supreme Being from whom the creation, sustenance and destruction of this world proceed."

Krishna in the Bhagavadgita describes the transcendental nature of Brahma by using the same kind of paradoxes as we find in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad. This is what he says: "Shining with all the sense faculties without any senses, unattached yet supporting everything, He enjoys qualities, though free from qualities. Without and within all beings, immovable and also movable, He is at hand and far away, being

imperceptible by reason of His subtlety. He is the light of all lights and is said to be beyond darkness. The embodiment of wisdom, the object of wisdom and to be reached by wisdom, He is seated in the hearts of all."

Making the last point more explicit, Krishna thus exhorts his disciple Arjuna in the last chapter of the Bhagavadgita: "The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, causing all beings to revolve by His mysterious power as though they were mounted on a machine. Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being. By His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace and everlasting dwelling place."

A further development of Hindu theology was the doctrine of Trimurti. As the passage of the Brahmasutra quoted above shows, God in Hindu theology has the triple function of creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. He is called Brahmā when he creates the universe, Vishnu when he protects it, and Shiva^a when he destroys it. He resorts to the quality of rajas or activity as creator, to that of Sattva or goodness as protector and that of tamas or darkness as destroyer of the world. In each of these aspects again God is believed to be endowed with his own special power or shakti.

As Brahmā or Creator his special power is Prajna or wisdom, as Vishnu or Protector his special power is Lakshmi or grace and as Shiva his special power is strength called Durga. These three shaktis were personified in the Puranas as goddesses, but their symbolic nature persisted even after their personification. Prajna was personified as Sarasvati who,

symbolic of the purity of wisdom, is regarded as an all-white Goddess, white in complexion, wearing a white sari with a vina or lute in her hands and riding on a white swan. Lakshmi is a goddess with a bright golden complexion who is depicted as holding a lotus flower in her hand as also standing on a lotus symbolic of grace. Durga is a fair-complexioned goddess carrying a sword in her hand and riding on a lion symbolic of strength.

In the well known Hindu philosophical systems of Vedanta, Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Yoga, God has the same qualities of perfection, transcendence, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence as attributed to Him in the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. It is only in God's relationship with his creation that they differ. According to Vedanta God is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe. According to the Nyaya-Vaisheshika systems God is only the efficient cause of the universe which he created out of the eternal atoms and souls. According to the Yoga system God brings about relations between the eternal prakriti or nature and the purushas or souls according to the moral deserts of the latter.

Since the Vedanta system is directly based on the Upanishads, which are considered shruti or revealed scriptures, its view of creation was regarded as authentic and was elaborated in the Puranas. According to these works God created the universe in six main stages. He first created intellect, then the subtle elements, then the inanimate macrocosm perceptible by senses, then the vegetable kingdom, then the

lower animals and finally the human beings.

So far as the Hindu view of relationship between God and souls is concerned, the Bhagavadgita throws light on it in the following passages :

extract

There are two types of souls in this world, the kshara or fallible i.e. unemancipated, and the akshara or infallible i.e. emancipated. All beings are fallible. The soul that has attained the supreme abode is said to be infallible.

The Highest Soul is verily another, declared as the Supreme Self, who as the indestructible Lord sustains the three worlds, having pervaded them.

The Vedantic view of God and His relationship with creation gave rise to two religio-philosophical systems founded ~~respectively~~ by Shankara and Ramanuja respectively. Shankara lived in the beginning of the ninth century A.D. According to his system, ~~which~~ called advaita or non-dualism, God is nirguna or attributeless, and the only Reality, the world, though appearing to emanate from Him is in fact an illusion, and the individual souls are identical with Him. The illusory appearance of the unreal world is caused by an inscrutable power of Brahma called maya that veils the true and projects the untrue. The individual soul considers itself distinct from Brahma on account of avidya or nescience. At the onset of knowledge the distinction disappears and one is released. It is, however, possible that by identifying the individual soul with the Supreme soul what Shankara meant to say was that the individual soul is an integral part of rather than absolutely identical with the Supreme soul. ~~as appears from a~~ This is indicated by a

beautiful prayer of his: ~~which rendered in the English language runs thus :-~~

extract

Though difference be none, I am of the ,
Not thou, O Lord, Of me ;
For of the sea is verily the wave,
Not of the wave the sea.

Be that as it may, the system of Shankara undoubtedly became a great philosophy. As a religious belief, however, it is the system of Ramanuja that dominates the Hindu mind. Ramanuja lived in the 11th century A.D. According to his system, which is called vishishtadvaita or qualified non-dualism, God is saguna or the possessor of all the best attributes, the world is real and the souls are not identical with God. The world is created by God not out of nothing but out of cit or conscious beings and acit or unconscious matter which in a subtle form are part of His own being. God is thus both the efficient and the material cause of the world. The relation between God on the one hand and souls and matter on the other is analogous to that between soul and body. The souls and matter are thus distinct from God but not separate from Him. God being the inner soul of the world remains ^aunaffected by changes in the world in the same way as the soul remains ^funaffected by changes in the body. God's creation of the universe out of His own being is thus explained in the Mundaka Upanishad :

extract

As a spider emits and draws its threads,
As herbs arise on earth,
As the hairs of the head and body from a living person,
So from the Imperishable arises every thing here.

Liberation, according to the system of Ramanuja is not absorption in God but communion with Him. It is attained by knowledge, performance of duty without selfish motive and devotion to God. Prapatti or self-surrender to God is, however, the surest way to release.

The main attributes of God according to the Hindu view as expounded by Ramanuja may be mentioned. God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is antaryamin or inner controller and saccidananda or the embodiment of truth, consciousness and bliss. He is endowed with infinite auspicious qualities such as justice, mercy, compassion and benevolence. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. He is often described by negative epithets as anadi, beginningless, ananta, infinite, agocara, not cognizable by senses, acintya, incomprehensible, and nirakara or formless. He is both immanent in the world as its indwelling sustainer and transcendent to it as its creator. He is neither personal, nor unpersonal, but super-personal.

Today when the amazingly rapid development of the means of communication has made the world so small, it is of utmost importance to clearly understand the relation between the theologies of Hinduism and the three monotheistic religions that originated in Western Asia viz. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The strictly monotheistic nature of the three Semitic religions lies in the fact that they do not allow their followers to entertain the idea of any co-sharer of God in their worship. In other words they do not allow their followers to worship any one besides God. Hinduism, on the other

hand, in spite of its clear concept of one Supreme Being, allows its followers to worship their avatars and devas. In practice, however, this difference between Hinduism and the Semitic religions is much narrowed down by the fact that the followers of the Semitic religions also, notwithstanding the strictly monotheistic nature of their religions, often do pray to their saints and angels. What is of primary importance in this connection is the fact that there are not only notable differences due to different traditions and backgrounds, but also remarkable similarities between Hinduism and the three monotheistic religions ~~so~~ far as the concept of one Supreme Ruler of the universe is concerned. These similarities are no doubt partly due to the fact that all human beings share certain common problems, feelings and sentiments. Many of the striking similarities are, however, to be attributed to a similar intellectual development as noted as early as 300 years before Christ by Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the Mauryan court, who made the following observation: "All that has been said regarding nature by the ancients is asserted also by philosophers out of Greece, on the one part in India by the Brahmans, and on the other in Syria by the people called the Jews".

Hinduism and the Semitic religions agree in attributing to God the highest metaphysical and ethical qualities. God according to Hinduism as well as the Semitic religions ^s is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is infinite, immanent into this world and also transcendent from it. He is the creator,

sustainer and destroyer of the world. He possesses the ethical qualities of justice, mercy and benevolence. There are, however, some points of difference also between the Hindu and Semitic concepts of God. The conception of God as antaryamin or inner controller and as the inner soul of the world is ~~distinctively~~ ^{distinctly} Hindu. The element of mystery in the nature of God is recognized by all religions but Hinduism gives expression to it in its own distinctive manner. According to it God's nature is so mysterious and so beyond human comprehension that it can best be described by using negative epithets for Him such as achintya, incomprehensible, aprameya, inscrutable, and agochara not cognizable by senses. Moreover, Judaism, ~~and~~ ^{and Islam} Christianity, regard God as personal. In Hinduism, however, God is neither personal nor impersonal, but super-personal.

God is the creator of the universe according to Hinduism as well as the three Semitic religions. The two traditions, however, mention different ways of the creation of the world by God. According to the religions of the Semitic tradition God is only the efficient cause of the world and created it ex nihilo. According to Hinduism, however, God is both the efficient and the material cause of the world. He created the world not out of nothing but out of His own being, because according to Hindu belief existence can not come out of non-existence.

According to the Bible God created the world in six ~~stages~~ ^{days}. He first created the light, then the firmament or heaven, then the earth, seas and herbs, then the sun, moon and stars, then the fishes and the birds

and finally, the cattle, beasts and human beings, The Hindu Puranas also mention six main stages of creation. These stages, however, differ in their details from those mentioned in the Bible, for, as already stated, they consist of intellect, subtle elements, inanimate macrocosm, vegetable kingdom, lower animals and human beings. The only thing common between the two accounts is that the human beings were the last to be created by God.

The question as to how God communicates with men in these religions is both interesting and important. According to Judaism and Islam God sends His messengers or prophets from time to time to reveal His message to mankind. Such prophets have come in the past and may come in the future, though according to Islam Muhammad was the last prophet and will not be followed by any other in the future, Christians on the other hand regard Jesus, the founder of their religion, as the incarnation of God. Hinduism has both these features. The rishis of Hinduism to whom God revealed the Vedas correspond to the prophets of Judaism and Islam, while the avatars, Rama and Krishna, hold practically the same position in Hinduism which Jesus holds in Christianity.

As regards the character of monotheism in Hinduism and the three Semitic religions, it must be admitted that Islam is more strictly monotheistic than any other religion. Like the Hindu doctrine of Trimurti, the Christian doctrine of Trinity regards God as three in one or one in three. In Hinduism the Trimurti is formed by God's three aspects as Brahmā or creator, Vishnu or preserver, and Shiva or destroyer. In Christianity the

Trinity is formed by God^J the Father, God^J the Son and God^J the Holy Spirit. The difference in the nature of the two concepts is clear, though some similarities may be pointed out. The first member is practically the same in both, Father in Christianity and Brahma, the Father of creation in Hinduism. The act of protecting or saving ~~the~~ mankind is attributed to the second member in both ~~the~~ religions. The name, though not the function, of the third member of the Hindu Trimurti, Shiva, meaning the auspicious one, may be compared to the name of the third member of the Christian Trinity.

Judaism too, at least in its later phases, is not as strictly monotheistic as Islam. In the voluminous works of the Talmud and Midrash literature, whose foundation was laid as early as the first century A.D., when Philo, the great Alexandrian Jewish philosopher lived, the Jewish concept of God underwent ~~such~~ ^{that} developments ~~as~~ took it far beyond the ethical monotheism of the Hebrew prophets. The most significant feature that marked this development was the concept the Shakina^{eh}, the manifestation of God's presence on earth. In course of time Shakina^{eh} came to be conceived not only as a separate divine entity but also a feminine one. The concept of Shakina^{eh} is clearly analogous to the Hindu concept of Shakti which originally only meant the power of God in his three aspects, but later developed into three separate entities.

There are also marked differences between Hinduism and the Semitic religions and between the Semitic religions themselves ^{as} far as the nature of God ~~in these~~ ~~religions~~ is concerned. Christianity, like Hinduism,

lays utmost emphasis on God's character of a loving Father. There is no cause ~~of~~ ^{to} fear ~~from~~ God, for He loves even the worst of sinners who take refuge in Him. In Hinduism ~~the~~ God is called Patitapavana or the purifier of the sinners. In Judaism, however, God is sometimes characterized as wrathful and revengeful also. It is even said that He had a contract with His people that He would save them only if they would serve Him. This, however, does not represent the essential feature of God in Judaism. Essentially God is regarded as a loving Father as much in Judaism as in Christianity and Hinduism. This concept of the fatherhood of God ~~is~~ not found ^{is} only in Islam ^{al} though in Islam ~~also~~ ^{too} God is regarded as kind and compassionate.

There is much in common between Hinduism and the Semitic religions so far as the relation between God and the emancipated souls is concerned. According to all these religions the soul after release becomes free, fetterless and infallible. It can, however, never become omniscient, omnipotent, ^omnipresent, and infinite like God. There is ^a marked similarity between Hinduism and Christianity ^{as} far as the relation between God and the emancipated soul is concerned. Moksha or salvation according to Hinduism as interpreted by Ramanuja as the attainment of an eternal communion with God and a permanent ⁿearnness to Him. ^{Also} According to Christianity ~~also~~ salvation lies in attaining eternal nearness to God. On the other hand, ~~one of~~ ^{mystical} the well known ^{philosophical} schools of Islam, ^{that of the} ~~whose followers are called~~ Sufis, ~~and~~ which began to have its impact on Muslim thought in India from the eleventh century A.D., was

greatly influenced by the advaita or non-dualistic philosophy of Shankara and like it believes in the ultimate unity of God and the soul.

A peculiar phenomenon that strikes the student of religion is the exclusivist attitude of the followers of some if not all the religions of the world. The Aryans, the ancestors of the modern Hindus, regarded their religion as superior to all others. Their priests, the Brahmins, considered themselves as God's representatives on the earth, and regarded the Aryan rishis as the only perceivers of truth, and the Vedas as the only revealed scriptures. The same phenomenon marks the followers of the Semitic religions. The Jews considered themselves as the chosen people of God and the Old Testament as the only revealed scripture. The Christians think that there is nothing in any religious book that is as noble and lofty as the Sermon on the Mount, and the Muslim regards the Quran as containing the highest wisdom. The Jews, Christians and Muslims are justly proud of the fact that their religions are marked by an uncompromising monotheism. But their exclusivist attitude is clearly reflected in their pattern of thinking according to which no non-Semitic religion possesses the idea of monotheism, and even knowledgeable persons among them brush aside the idea of a Supreme Being found in Hindu scriptures as pantheism, monism, deism or some other thing different from monotheism. This attitude in its origin was undoubtedly the outcome of ignorance of other peoples' religions and scriptures due to lack of communication. It has now crystallized into a firm belief and even some knowledgeable persons owing allegiance to Judaism, Christianity or Islam consider it a

heresy to acknowledge that the idea of monotheism exists in many non-Semitic religions. There have, of course, always been honourable exceptions and even in as early as the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. the great Muslim scholar Al-Beruni made the following unequivocal statement about Hindu monotheism- "The Hindus believe with regard to God that He is eternal, without beginning and end, acting by free will, all-mighty, all-wise, living, giving life, ruling, preserving, one who in His sovereignty is unique, beyond all likeness and unlikeness, and that He does not resemble any thing nor does any thing resemble Him".

In summing up it may be said that the Hindu concept of God agrees in essentials with that found in the three monotheistic religions of the west, though this fact is not very well known in the west. There are of course a number of differences, but it should be remembered that the concept of God is by no means identical in every respect even in the three monotheistic religions. In order to bring men and women of different religious traditions closer to each other it is necessary to lay emphasis on the points of agreement rather than on the points of difference. However, a student of religion must learn and impart full facts in order to maintain a scholarly detachment, objectivity and impartiality.

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