

‘VEDAS’ AND MONOTHEISM

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Abstract: Traditional Hinduism is commonly held to be polytheistic and in most strains of the tradition it would be totally right, there is also a monotheistic part which is often overlooked, even among many historians of religion and Hindu theologians.

Most of the people think Hinduism as a strange polytheism with many armed and multi headed gods. Indeed, ‘*Pancho Pasana*’ the worship of five gods (*Durga, Surya, Ganesha, Shiva, and Vishnu*) —often considered the very epitome of polytheistic understanding which can be seen in a monotheistic light also. The tradition, the more I became aware of a different opinion, one that is not as common as the polytheistic view, at least in some cases.

Keywords: Veda, Monotheism, Hinduism, Brahman, Bhagvat-Gita, Universe, Oneness.

Introduction:

A lot of religious scriptures we can find in Hinduism. Most of the people consider Vedas are the pillar scripture of Hinduism. Vedas are *Shruti* (what is heard) And a *puruseya* (not of a human or superhuman) revelations that highlighted verses of holy sounds and texts heard by Vedic saints after deep meditation. Due to it we can say that Vedic cognition is the base of pivotal and endless consciousness. There are three basic parts in Vedas: *Karmakanda*(activities), *Jnana Kanda*(knowledge), and *Upasanakanda* (rituals).

We can find trade, economics, wealth distribution, sociology, politics, agriculture, science in the part of *Karmakanda*. The *Jnanakanda* is the central pillar of the Vedic literature. It set up the universal omnipresent and primordial being of the universe, namely Brahmanism. The *Upasanakanda* consists of hymns for prayer and rituals. Vedas contain 20,197 verses. *Rigveda* consists of 10,472 verses. *Samveda* consists of 1,810 verses. *Yajurveda* consists of 1,915 verses. *Atharvaveda* consists of 6,000 verses. Vedas were very critical to understand by common people. So, it forms 108 Upanishads. These consists of a lot of verses which can very easily highlight summary of Vedas. Bhagvat Gita (Prabhupada, 1998) is the genuine scripture of Hinduism. It is basic explanation of all Vedic scriptures. It has 700 verses.

This article is a broad and detailed enquiry into the theme ‘Vedas and

Monotheism'. Some authors wrote in some research papers related with this theme. I have taken a lot of help from internet to complete this research paper.

Discussion:

The matter of monotheism is confusing in Hinduism due to the presence of various demigods. Basically, *Jnana Kanda* of Vedas highlight the form of monotheism in Hinduism. Vedic saints have been guided by the principle of natural order. It controls the rhythm of the universe. By this way Vedas can highlight a holistic world view. It involves bonding between Soul and Brahman.

Vedic saints saw many natural disasters. At the very first moment the saints thought that there might be a proper plan behind any kind of disastrous event, according to this kind of thinking enormous number of demigods involved in Vedas followed by specific hymns for everyone. For example, *Indra*, the great honored demigod imagined performing three worldly activities such as to bring rain for the vegetation, destroy atheists and taking care of sky and celestial objects¹. *Agni* is the god of fire; *Lakshmi*, the god of wealth; *Ganesha*, the problem solving etc. The Saints were capable to understand that all events of nature proceed on a specific way. They also understood that all the events are interrelated. The saints also realized that there was one pivotal power behind each worldly event. The saints said that this power is 'Brahman'. This principle is evolutionary and found in *Rig Veda*. It indicates that it is heard by the saints in succession with the advent of holiness of knowledge (Table –1). It should be remembered that *Rig Veda* is cited *Mandala* (Chapter), the *Shukta* (sub chapter), and *Rik* (verses).

The theory of oneness of Brahman has also been discussed in various Upanishads (e.g.- *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya* Upanishads). We know that the Upanishads are the philosophical description of Vedas. So, to avoid repetition no further citation is made.

The theory of oneness of Brahman has been vividly highlighted in *Yajur Veda*, *Atharva Veda* and *Brahma Samhita* (Table- 2).

We can say that Hindu religion 'monotheistic that is Brahman is one. But the main question comes here, first why followers worship so many gods and goddesses, secondly is there any basis of the myth that there are 330 million demigods? According to the previous discussion we can assume that 'the truth is one, but learned persons call it by many names or describe him in many ways'- "Ekam sat Vipra Baudha Vadanti.... "². Here, it can be said that while the supreme divinity is one, the power express itself differently. 'Brahman' don't have any shape.

It is almost impossible to know the indefinitely shapeless Brahman by senses. Vedic saints highlighted the concept of various gods and goddesses as various finite parts of the external energy of Brahman, which has been worshipped and celebrated by the theologians for ages. This theory is the broad expression of single 'Brahman'.

Following this principle worship of various gods and goddesses became a regular custom among people. Here it should be remembered also that two parallel forms of worship prevail- a) infinite (*Nirakar*), b) finite (*Sakar*).

Most of the Hindu people observes variety of religious festivities, worship many kinds of demigods. People start to believe that there would have enormous number of gods and goddesses (33 *Koti*). There exists another school of thought which is called as 'non-duality'. The principle of this school is that there is no difference between Soul and Brahman. It is said that, once India had 33 *Koti* people, so it became a perpetuating myth that there would have 33 crore demigods. Let see what about it, we can find in our original scriptures.

Basically, the word '*Koti*' has been wrongly highlighted here. Here *Koti* does not mean value of number system. It means category or type. So, it can be said that 33 *Koti* means 33 types. It includes all gods and demigods. They are the energies and manifestations of Brahman. These energies create, sustain, and destroy the universe. By this way the concept of 'tri-god' principle has come in front. *Brahma* is highlighted as the creator. *Vishnu* is highlighted as the preserver. *Shiva* is highlighted as the destroyer.

There is a proper explanation in Vedas and Upanishads about 33 gods and goddesses as follows—

The *Rig Veda* mentions 33 divinities in the 1st mandala that there are 11 *Devas* (demigods) each for the three worlds or zones (earth, air/ether, and sky):

“Oye eleven gods whose home is heaven, Oye eleven who make earth your dwelling, Ye who with might, eleven, live in waters, accept this sacrifice, O gods with pleasure”³.

33 divinities are also mentioned in the *Yajur Veda*:

“May deities, eleven threes, the three and thirty bounteous Ones, whose House-priest is *Brihaspati*, by impulse of bright Savitar, the gods protect me with the gods”⁴.

In the '*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*', the great saint *Yogyabalka* replied to a question from *Shakalya Rishi* that there are 33 *Devas*. In '*Satapata Brahmana*', an Upanishad the same 33 deities have been highlighted.

The particulars of these 33 deities can be found in one of the compositions of The Vedas named '*Brahmana*'. As per, '*Brahmana*' (also mentioned in Upanishads and Bhagvat Purana) the 33 deities are: 12 *Adityas*, 11 *Rudras*, 8 *Vasus*, and 2 *Ashwins* (Table-3). As per Vedas, *Aditi* is the mother of all gods (*Devamata*), from her all 12 zodiacal spirits from cosmic matrix were born called *Adityas*.

According to Bhagvat Gita, to worship demigods is not wrong but human's focus should be on the worshipping of the supreme to attain *Moksha* (ultimate liberation). As per Bhagvat Gita “whatever a person may sacrifice to other gods, O son of *Kunti*, is really meant for Me alone, but it is offered without true understanding”⁵.

According to Bhagvat Gita— ‘I (*Krishna*) am the only enjoyer and the only object of sacrifice. Those who do not recognize My true transcendental nature fall’⁶. After that Lord *Krishna* finally declared that — “Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; those who worship ancestors go to the ancestors; and those who worship me will live with Me”⁷.

Another statement from Bhagvat Gita makes it clear that our pivotal goal is to worship Lord *Krishna*. The statement is— “Vedic principles, those who worship demigods they achieve only flickering happiness, and return to this mortal planet again, those who worship Lord *Krishna* go back to him as the liberated soul”⁸.

It is recognized that Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world but there is some misunderstanding among people about the supreme power or *Bhagwan*. According to various scriptures like ‘Upanishads’, ‘Brahm-Samhita’, ‘Bhagvat Gita’ and ‘Puranas’, it can be finalized that Lord *Krishna* is the *Bhagwan*. According to ‘Vishnu purana’ if one has six transcendental powers parallelly then he is called *Bhagwan*⁹. Complete wealth, complete strength, complete beauty, complete fame, complete knowledge, and complete asceticism are these six powerful features.

Conclusion:

From various citation of vast Vedas and other religious scriptures, it can be concluded that Hinduism is monotheistic. It directly means Brahman is one and second to none. Various analyzers of Vedas also positively give their views on this matter. The reputed German mystic and Vedic commentator Max Muller described this transcendental advancement of Vedic knowledge as Henotheism (adherence to one God out of several) and concluded that “the great divinity of Vedic God is One”¹⁰. The oneness of Brahman has a peaceful meaning. It means that we call the supreme power in different names in different faiths. Thus, Hinduism is a devotion to one single god so that everybody after the complete purification of mind and soul would be go back to Godhead (termed as *Moksha*). As per Bhagavatam, Lord *Krishna* is broadened in the trio form (*Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh*) depending upon the three natural *Gunas* (*Sattva, Raja, Tama*) to create, preserve, and destroy the universe¹¹. Actually, Hinduism came from a paradigm that there is only one supreme power for humankind. Everyone can pray for eternal bliss and can return to him. This can be termed as *Moksha*.

In this research some biases may not be excluded from various analysis of various records, narratives, translations, etc. Ultimately it can be said that any fault in and in citations is unintentional. It is absolutely true that a lot of research is required to support the present analysis.

Illustrations:

Table-1. The Supreme divinity (Brahman) is One according to *RigVeda*

Rig Veda	Citation Script
1 st mandala*	First, sages' question 'is the one who is staggering these six cosmic regions, who dwells without birth, the one?
2 nd mandala	Second, the mind of sages became stable saying 'Brahman is one and has no second'- ('Ekam ebam advaitam'; 'Ekmeb dwityatam')
3 rd mandala*	Third, thoughts of sages became more cohesive and there was no doubt in their mind about the singularity of Brahman. There are 22 <i>Riks</i> (<i>Sukta 55</i>) in this mandala. At the end of each <i>Rik</i> , sages declared, 'the source of power of all great deities is the same and He is the One and Almighty - ('Mahat Devanang Suratang Ekam').
3 rd mandala*	Finally, sages described Brahman as the 'shining Light' - 'Barenyang Vargo' in the famous 'Gayatri Mantra'. This is confirmed by Lord Krishna in the BG, 'I am the Gayatri among mantras' (BG: 10.35).
Prajapati	Oneness of Brahman
Vishmakarma	Oneness of Brahman

**mandala*=chapter; *Shukta*=sub chapter; *Rik*=Verse

Table-2. The Supreme divinity (Brahman) is One according to *Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda, and other Vedic scriptures*

Scripture	Citation Script
Yajur Veda	'The true knower is the one who knows that the lord is one and the same. He is omnipotent. Everything in life and inanimate is at his fingerprints, the center of all power is one and unique'
Atharva Veda	In the beginning He was the only one, the source of all creation. He is the Exalted in Might, the wise.'
Brahma Samhita	'I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is inaccessible to the Vedas, but obtainable by pure Unalloyed devotion of the soul, who is without a Second, who is not subject to decay, is without a beginning, whose form is endless, who is the Beginning, and the eternal Purusha' 'He is an undifferentiated entity. all the universe exist in him, and He is present in His fullness in every One of the atoms that are scattered throughout the universe, at one and the same time, such is the Primeval Lord whom I adore'

Table-3. The name of 33 *devas* (*gods and goddesses*)
Supporting documentation for the quote

Group Name	Individual Name	Attributes
Adityas (12)	Vishnu	the head of all the Adityas
1	Aryaman	the protector of 'Milky way'
2	Indra	the king of heaven
3	Tvastar	the god of fashioner
4	Varuna	the god of sky and seas and for justice and truth
5	Dhatri	the god of domestic health and tranquility
6	Bhaga	the lord of wealth and prosperity
8	Parjanya	the god of rain and thunder
9	Vivaswat	synonym of sun god
10	Amshuman	no real denomination
11	Mitra	Hindu and Persian god
12	Pushan	The god of 'meeting'
Rudras (11)	Kapali Pingala Bheema Virupaksha Vilohita Shastra Ajapaad Ahirbudhnya Shambhu Chand Bhava	In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, it is described that the 11 Rudras represent ten vital energies. These are <i>Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana, Vyana, Naga, Rtaadhvaja, Kurma, Deva Data, Krikala</i> .
Vasu (8)	Dhara Anala Anila Aap Pratyusha Prabhava Soma Dhruba	Earth Fire Wind Water Sun Sky/Ether Moon Motionless Stars
Ashwin (2)	Nasatya and Dasra	the twin solar deities for Ayurvedic medicine The Ashwins are mentioned 376 times in the <i>Rigveda</i> , with 57 hymns specifically dedicated to them.

Supporting documentation for the quote
'Lord Krishna is the supreme divinity, Bhagwan'

**Vedic scripture/Script
Brahma-Samhita**

Isvarah paramah krsnah sac-cid-ananda-vigrahah anadir adir go-vindah Sarva karana karanam' (Krishna is the original Govinda, Bhagwan, He is an eternally happy Spiritual being, He has no other source, He is the source of all, and He is the root cause of all causes). '*Govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*' (O Adi Purush Govinda, I worship you)

Brahma Upanishad

‘Bhagwan is the omnipotent creator of the universe, who is unspoken, eternal, infinite, omnipresent, and the spiritual essence of the universe’ Bhagvat Gita ‘I am Brahma as the creator’ ‘I am Vishnu as the Adityas’ Among the slayers I am Mahakal Rudra’ and ‘I am Shiva as Rudra’ ‘I am the establishment or refuge of Brahman irrespective of. I am the refuge of immortality, eternity, and ecstatic happiness’ ‘Everything inanimate and conscious has originated from both my natures. therefore, I am the root cause of the origin and destruction of the world’ ‘There is no one better than me. The whole universe resides in me, just as the gems in the sūtra are lyrical’ ‘I am the Paramatman in the heart of all living beings, I am the Origin, the 10.20,10.32 Middle and the infinite of the universe’

Srimad-Bhagvatam

Krishnatu Bhagwano Soyong (Lord Krishna is Lord Himself, and ‘Cause of all causes’)

Endnotes

1. Rig Veda - 1.63, 1.174.1.s
2. Rig Veda- 1.164.46.
3. Rig Veda- 1.139.11.
4. Yajur Veda- 20.11.
5. Bhagvat Gita- 9.23.
6. Bhagvat Gita- 9.24.
7. Bhagvat Gita- 9.25.
8. Bhagvat Gita- 9.21.
9. Vishnu Purana- 6.5.64.
10. Muller- 1859.
11. Bhagavatam- 1.2.23.

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