


A POWER WE CALL GOD

by

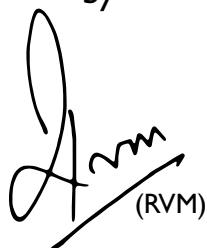


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Preface

God has always fascinated me, captivated me and intrigued me. Over the years, several questions have surfaced in my mind, not all of which have I found answers for. Does God exist? Where is God? Can I see God? Can I meet God? How does God look like? Is God like a human being? Are heaven and hell for real or is it just a myth? Does God reside in heaven? Where did I come from? Who gave me life? What will happen to me after I die? Where will I go after death? Will I be born again?

Different people, cultures and religions have different theories as answers to these questions, but there is none that I can fully understand or accept. Isn't the universe very mysterious? Where did this Earth emerge from? The Sun, Moon, stars, birds, animals and flowers — who created all of these? And then we have the breeze that blows, the water that flows and the sun that glows — all this can't just happen on its own! Surely, something is making it happen. But, what is that force?

Who created the human race? There are billions of people, each different and unique! Wow! Who made them all? Some may argue that biologically, we are the result of procreation, that is, the fusion of the male and female energies of our parents. But who made our parents or rather who created the first man and woman on Earth?

This book you are reading hasn't just come into your hands; someone wrote it; somebody created it. Similarly, somebody must



have created the Universe. Who is the Creator of the Universe?

Did the entire magical Universe create itself? Is that possible? Some people say a Big Bang created all this! But who made the Big Bang happen? There are hundreds of theories, but which one is true?

The truth, as I see it, is that some power exists; a power that made all this happen. It is a power that is beyond our limited comprehension; a power we cannot see or discover but can only experience. Yes, such a power exists! It is the Universal Power -


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Chapter 1

Many Religions, One God!



The world has numerous religions- Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, and many more. Each religion has its own Gods and Goddesses. Each religion claims to be “the religion” and wants the whole world to believe in it as well as follow its God.

Each religion has created its own theology, belief system, culture, values, rituals and customs. As we go through them, we realize that each religion follows a different philosophy of life and that philosophy is prescribed to its followers. Though the “do’s” and “don’ts” of these religions are different, what is it that is common amongst all religions? What is that underlying idea about God that all religions agree upon?

Let us very briefly glance through the beliefs of the most widespread religions of the world to find out about this.

Hinduism

Hinduism is the oldest religion that over the years has evolved on its own, with more than 828–1,000 million followers in India and all over the world. Hinduism has no founder per se and dates back to antiquity. There is some supportive evidence which proves that it existed centuries ago, even as far back as 3000 BC.

The root word for “Hindu” comes from “Indus.” People who inhabited the shores around the Indus River came to be known as Hindus and their religion came to be known as Hinduism. The term and the community were identified as such, as a result of the

various invasions across time.

Hinduism, more than a religion, is considered to be “a way of life”. Its principal pillar is *dharma*, which stands for “right action” or “duty and obligation”. Hinduism uses the concept of soul power or *atma shakti* to explain occurrences in the inner and outer world. These explanations are derived from personal experiences of various sages who appear in the Vedas. Hindus fall under sects and subsects, following different practices and rituals and possess different philosophical texts that explain God’s existence through the knowledge of specific gurus. Most Hindus believe that God is one, but known by different names. Some believe in the trinity theory of God, which states that there exist three different and important Gods by the name Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. Although torn between different experiential and logical claims, all Hindus ultimately believe in the power of devotion to Gods and Goddesses.

An important way in which Hinduism has guided the way of life of people is by emphasizing on four basic objectives or purusharthas; namely: 1. *dharma* or righteousness in duty; 2. *artha* or wealth spent as per dharma; 3. *kama* or desire as per dharma; and 4. moksha or liberation from desires. *Moksha* is the ultimate goal. Hindus largely believe that liberation should be pursued until the end of one’s life in order to escape the vicious cycles of rebirth (i.e.

life after death) and this is based on the law of *karma*.

Hinduism is a polytheistic religion. That is, it believes in or worships more than one God. The most popular Gods amongst Hindus are Lord Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Ganesha and Mata (Mother).

The list of festivals that the Hindus celebrate is long and endless. Each God has a day of festival dedicated to him/her alone. For example; Shiva is worshipped on Maha Shivaratri, Ganesha on Ganesha Chaturthi, Rama on Diwali and Krishna on Krishna Janmashtmi. The Goddesses are worshipped during Navaratri and are associated with season changes and harvest.

The Vedas are considered to be the fountainhead of knowledge in India. They have been the source of numerous other forms of knowledge such as *Yoga* (a physical, mental and spiritual discipline that leads to acquisition of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility), *Jyotishya* (science of understanding the subtle influences that come to us from the greater universe), *Ayurveda* (a system of traditional medicine native to India and a form of alternative medicine), *Yagna* (a ritual of sacrifice derived from the Vedas, which is performed to please the Gods or to fulfill *sankalpas* (auspicious resolves), *Vastu* (the “science of construction” borne out of a traditional and archaic view on how the laws of nature affect human dwellings), *Tantra* (an accumulation of practices and ideas, characterized by rituals that seek to access the

supramundane through the mundane while identifying the microcosm with the macrocosm) and so on.

Hinduism, therefore, is a vast ocean, with inputs from various saints and learned people; it has evolved over the years to suit present times. It is a religion that advocates all religions are different paths leading to the one Supreme God.

Christianity

Christianity is the world's largest religion with around 2,000 million followers.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion. It is dominant in the West and is the most popular religion today in the world with followers spreading all across in large numbers. It originated in the early 1st century AD. Jesus Christ is the central figure of this faith. He was a Jew by birth and his year of birth is estimated to be between 6–4 BC. He revealed himself to the world as a preacher in Galilee after he completed 30 years of age. Also, most Christians believe that Jesus did not come to start a religion but to restore the broken relationship between mankind and God the Father- A relationship that had been broken by Sin.

The Gospels in the New Testament refer to Jesus as Son of God, as a teacher and a Messiah. According to Jesus; repentance, transformation, love for God and neighbor, and lastly love for

justice are the yardsticks that decide one's entry into the Kingdom of God.

A large number of Christians believe in the Trinity; it consists of three distinct entities—The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. According to this doctrine, there is only one God in three persons. Each person is God; whole and entire. As the Fourth Lateran Council declared, “it is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” They are distinct in personality but intimate and one in relationship. Christianity is composed of, but not limited to, five major branches of churches; Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant; some groupings include Anglicans amongst Protestants.

The Bible says that God created man in his own image and as a perfect entity, but that it was man's sins that has degenerated and corrupted the image of God. According to Christianity, all men are born with the seed of sin and they can be liberated only by the grace of God when they surrender to “Him”.

It advocates the spirit of sacrifice since God set an example by sacrificing His only son, Jesus Christ, on the cross to bring about our redemption.

Thomas, the apostle, brought Christianity to the shores of India and introduced it for the first time in Kerala when he visited Muziris

in 52 AD to spread the gospel amongst Kerala's Jewish settlements. True Christians put God above everything and are therefore humble before God and men. They are committed to the promises and prophecies of Jesus and obey God's Commandments. Making time for prayer and trusting in Jesus are crucial to their wellbeing and happiness.

Islam

The word Islam means "submission to God", "peace" and "way of life". Islam was taught by Prophet Muhammad who is considered as the last and final prophet. He was born in Mecca (now Saudi Arabia) in 570AD. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim. Their holy book, the Qur'an, is considered to be the direct words of God. All Muslims believe in God's oneness and feel that He stands unparalleled.

Belief in angels is one of the foundation on which the faith of Islam is based. There are 5 pillars and 6 articles of faith on which Islam rests its belief. Every devout Muslim is required to perform prayers five times a day. Fasting, called Sawm, that is, abstaining from food and drink (among other things) must be performed from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan.

Zakāt refers to the gesture of donating a fixed portion of one's wealth to the poor and needy and this process invariably aids in

the propagation of Islam.

Every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it must make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

Muslims believe that the purpose of existence is to worship God.

Judaism

Judaism is said to have been founded in 2000 BC and is therefore one of the oldest religions in the world. People who follow Judaism are known as Jews. Previously, they were known as Hebrews. Judaism is believed to have started when God formed a covenant (a sacred agreement) with the Jews through Prophet Abraham.

Judaism is said to be the founding religion of many other religions including Christianity and Islam. It continues to survive widely today with over 14 million Jews.

According to Judaism, God revealed himself to Abraham and advocated the principle of a monotheistic god. Their God is called Jehovah or Yaweh and their place of worship is known as the Synagogue.

Their holy book is called the Torah. The Torah is said to be a tablet that was given by God directly to Moses. It contains the Ten Commandments: 1. Worship no other Gods, 2. Do not worship idols, 3. Do not take the Lord's name in vain, 4. Keep the Sabbath Day holy, 5. Honor your father and mother, 6. Do not commit

murder, 7. Do not commit adultery, 8. Do not steal, 9. Do not give false testimony against your neighbor and 10. Do not covet. These commandments form the core of the Jewish beliefs.

Thus belief in a single and omnipotent God is the fundamental dogma of Judaism.

Sikhism

Sikhism, a religion of Indian origin, was founded in 1500 AD by Guru Nanak Devji (1469—1539) who was born into a Hindu family. Sikhism was born at a time when there was tension in India between Hindus and Muslims. Guru Nanak had then famously said, “There is no Hindu. There is no Muslim. So whose path shall I follow? I shall follow the way of God!” Thus the monotheistic religion Sikhism was born. Its main aim was to admonish the belief in different Gods and adhere to the principle of one God or *Ek Onkar*.

Sikhism comes from the Punjabi word *sikh* meaning “learner” or “disciple.” Today there are about 23 million Sikhs worldwide—with 19 million in India and the rest spread in other parts of the world—most prominently in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.

Their sacred book is called the *Adi Granth* and their place of worship is the *Gurudwara*. The *Gurudwara* is the centre of the Sikh

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