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contrasting grounds. The prime common ground between the schools of thought is that both are theistic religions. But that seems to be the only ideology, that is common between the two. The major difference between the Hindu and Muslim perception of God is the common Hindus' belief in the philosophy of Pantheism. Pantheism considers everything, living and non-living, to be Divine and Sacred. The common Hindu, therefore, considers everything as God. He considers the trees as God, a snake as God and even human beings as manifestations of God. Islam, on the contrary, exhorts man to consider himself and his surroundings as examples of Divine Creation rather than as divinity itself. Muslims therefore believe that everything is God's and not God itself.

the heavens and the earth magnifies Him; He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا  
خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ 32

There is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His throne comprises the heavens and earth; the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-High, the All-Glorious.

"People of the Book, go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, 'Three.' Refrain; better is it for you. God is only one God. Glory be to Him - (He is) above having a son."<sup>33</sup>

After analyzing the concepts of God presented in the two major world religions, we can compare the two and find common and



A believer loves, and is grateful to God for the bounties He bestowed upon him, but being aware of the fact that his good deeds, whether mental or physical, are far from being commensurate with Divine favors, he is always anxious lest God should punish him, here or in the Hereafter. He, therefore, fears Him, surrenders himself to Him and serves Him with great humility. One cannot be in such a mental state without being almost all the time mindful of God. Remembering God is thus the life force of faith, without which it fades and withers away.

The Quran tries to promote this feeling of gratitude by repeating the attributes of God very frequently. We find most of these attributes mentioned together in the following verses of the Quran:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ - هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ - هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ - 31

He is God; there is no god but He, He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible; He is the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. He is God; there is no God but He. He is the King, the All-Holy, the All-Peace, the Guardian of Faith, the All-Preserver, the All-Mighty, the All-Compeller, the All-Sublime. Glory be to God, above that they associate! He is God the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belongs the Names Most Beautiful. All that is in

which you associate, I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth; a man of pure faith, I am not of the idolaters." 30

**The Believer's Attitude:** In order to be a Muslim, i.e., to surrender oneself to God, it is necessary to believe in the oneness of God, in the sense of His being the only Creator, Preserver, Nourisher, etc. But this belief - later on called "Tawhid Ar-Rububiyah is not enough." Many of the idolaters knew and believed that only the Supreme God could do all this. But that was not enough to make them Muslims. To tawhid ar-rububiyah one must add tawhid al'uluhiyyah, i.e., one acknowledges the fact that is God alone who deserves to be worshipped, and thus abstains from worshipping any other thing or being.

Having achieved this knowledge of the one true God, man should constantly have faith in Him, and should allow nothing to induce him to deny truth.

When faith enters a person's heart, it causes certain mental states which result in certain actions. Taken together these mental states and actions are the proof for the true faith. The Prophet said, "Faith is that which resides firmly in the heart and which is proved by deeds."

The feeling of gratitude is so important that a non-believer is called 'kafir,' which means 'one who denies a truth' and also 'one who is ungrateful.'

powerful Creators? A moment's thought shows that this is not feasible.

The Quran summarizes this argument in the following verses:

"God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with Him: For then each god would have taken of that which he created and some of them would have risen up over others." <sup>26</sup> And Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than God, they (heaven and earth) would surely go to ruin." <sup>27</sup>

The Oneness of God the Quran reminds us of the falsity of all alleged gods. To the worshippers of man-made objects, it asks:

"Do you worship what you have carved yourself?" <sup>28</sup>

"Or have you taken unto you others beside Him to be your protectors, even such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves?" <sup>29</sup>

To the worshippers of heavenly bodies it cites the story of Abraham:

"When night outspread over him he says a star and said, 'This is my Lord. "

But when it set he said, 'I love not the setters.' When he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray.' When he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater.' But when it set he said, 'O my people, surely I quit that

The Creator must be of a different nature from the things created because if he is of the same nature as they are, he will be temporal and will therefore need a maker. It follows that nothing is like Him. If the maker is not temporal, then he must be eternal. But if he is eternal, he cannot be caused, and if nothing outside him causes him to continue to exist, which means that he must be self-sufficient. And if he does not depend on anything for the continuance of his own existence, then this existence can have no end. The Creator is therefore eternal and everlasting: 'He is the First and the Last.'

He is Self-Sufficient or Self-Subsistent or, to use a Quranic term, Al-Qayyum. The Creator does not create only in the sense of bringing things into being, He also preserves them and takes them out of existence and is the ultimate cause of whatever happens to them.

"God is the Creator of everything. He is the guardian over everything. Unto Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth." <sup>24</sup>

"No creature is there crawling on the earth, but its provision rests on God. He knows its lodging place and its repository." <sup>25</sup>

**God's Attributes** - If the Creator is eternal and Everlasting, then His attributes must also be eternal and everlasting. He should not lose any of His attributes nor acquire new ones. If this is so, then His attributes are absolute. Can there be more than one Creator with such absolute attributes? Can there be for example, two absolutely

sake and people oppressing and exploiting other people all their lives should not receive similar treatment from their Lord. Expecting similar treatment for them will amount to negating the very belief in the accountability of man in the Hereafter and thereby negating all the incentives for a moral and virtuous life in this world. The following Qur'anic verses are very clear and straightforward in this respect:

"Verily, for the Righteous are gardens of Delight, in the Presence of their Lord. Shall we then treat the people of Faith like the people of Sin? What is the matter with you? How judge you?"<sup>23</sup>

Islam rejects characterizing God in any human form or depicting Him as favoring certain individuals or nations on the basis of wealth, power or race. He created the human-beings as equals. They may distinguish themselves and get His favor through virtue and piety only.

The concept that God rested in the seventh day of creation, that God wrestled with one of His soldiers, that God is an envious plotter against mankind, or that God is incarnate in any human being are considered blasphemy from the Islamic point of view.

The unique usage of Allah as a personal name of God is a reflection of Islam's emphasis on the purity of the belief in God which is the essence of the message of all God's messengers. Because of this, Islam considers associating any deity or personality with God as a deadly sin which God will never forgive, despite the fact He may forgive all other sins.

the Trinity or any attempt to make God human. It is interesting to notice that Allah is the personal name of God in Aramaic, the language of Jesus and a sister language of Arabic.

The One true God is a reflection of the unique concept that Islam associates with God. The Prophet Muhammad was asked by his contemporaries about Allah; the answer came directly from God Himself in the form of a short chapter of the Quran, which is considered the essence of the unity or the motto of monotheism.

This is chapter 112 which reads:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ 22

Say (O Muhammad) He is God the One God, the Eternal, the Absolute, He begets not nor is He begotten, and there is nothing that can be compared to Him.

Some non-Muslims allege that God in Islam is a stern and cruel God who demands to be obeyed fully. He is not loving and kind. Nothing can be farther from truth than this allegation. It is enough to know that, with the exception of one, each of the 114 chapters of the Quran begins with the verse: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." In one of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) we are told that God is more loving and kinder than a mother to her dear child.

But God is also Just. Hence evildoers and sinners must have their share of punishment and the virtuous, His bounties and favors. Actually God's attribute of Mercy has full manifestation in His attribute of Justice. People suffering throughout their lives for His

The most fundamental belief that a Muslim has is that "There is only One God" the Creator, the Sustainer -- known in the Arabic language and by Muslims as *Allah*. Allah is neither a foreign god nor an idol. Arabic-speaking Christians use the same word for the Almighty. The fundamental pillar of faith in Islam is to testify that "there is no deity worthy of worship except the One True Almighty God" written in Arabic as:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

In the Qur'an, we read that Allah is Compassionate and Merciful. He is Kind, Loving, and Wise. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Healer. He is the One who Guides, the One who Protects, the One who Forgives. There are traditionally ninety-nine names, or attributes, that Muslims use to describe Allah's nature.

Some non-Muslims mistakenly believe that Allah is an "Arab god" or some sort of idol. Allah is the proper name of the One True God, in the Arabic language used by Muslims all over the world. Allah is a name that is neither feminine nor masculine, and it cannot be made plural (unlike god, gods, goddess, etc). Muslims believe that there is nothing in the heavens nor on earth that deserves worship except Allah, the One True Creator.

Islam is based on the concept of Tawhid, or Unity of God. Muslims are strictly monotheistic, and fiercely reject any attempt to make God visible or human. Islam rejects any form of idol worship, even if it is an attempt to get "closer" to God, and rejects

Moses, Jesus, and other prophets. Islam includes many religious practices. Adherents are generally required to observe the Five Pillars of Islam, which are five duties that unite Muslims into a community. In addition to the Five Pillars, Islamic law (sharia) has developed a tradition of rulings that touch on virtually all aspects of life and society. This tradition encompasses everything from practical matters like dietary laws and banking to warfare.

The Quran is the sole scripture of Islam which was revealed over Prophet Muhammad over a period of approximately twenty three years through angel Gabriel. Its revelation was not in the exact order as we find it compiled today. The verses were brought down to Muhammad as the answer to the persisting situation faced by him. Muslims regard the Qur'ān as the culmination of a series of divine messages that started with those revealed to Adam regarded, in Islam, as the first prophet and including the Suhuf-i-Ibrahim (*Scrolls of Abraham*), the Tawrat (Torah), the Zabur (Psalms), and the Injil (Gospel). The aforementioned books are recognized in the Qur'ān, and the Qur'anic text assumes familiarity with many events from Jewish and Christian scriptures, retelling some of these events in distinctive ways, and referring obliquely to others. "It rarely offers detailed accounts of historical events; the Qur'an's emphasis is typically on the moral significance of an event, rather than its narrative sequence."<sup>21</sup> Details to historical events are contained within the Hadith of Muhammad and the narrations of Muhammad's Companions.



Upanishads state that whoever becomes fully aware of the ātman as the innermost core of one's own self, realizes their identity with Brahman and thereby reaches Moksha (liberation or freedom). Other schools (for example, Dvaita Vedanta) and other schools, understand Brahman as a Supreme Being who possesses personality. "In these conceptions, Brahman is associated with deities such as Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva or Shakti called the ideology of *Trimurti*."<sup>20</sup> The ātman is dependent on God while Moksha depends on love towards God and on God's grace. When God is viewed as the supreme personal being (rather than as the infinite principle) God is called Ishvara (The Lord), Bhagavan (The Auspicious One), or Parameshwara (The Supreme Being).

### **Islamic Scriptures:**

Islam is a monotheistic religion originating with the teachings of Muhammad, a 7th-century Arab religious and political figure. The word Islam means "submission", or the total surrender of oneself to God. An adherent of Islam is known as a Muslim, meaning "one who submits (to God)". There are between 1 and 1.5 billion Muslims, making Islam the second-largest religion in the world, after Christianity.

Muslims believe that God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad, God's final prophet, and regard the Qur'an and the Sunnah (words and deeds of Muhammad) as the fundamental sources of Islam. They do not regard Muhammad as the founder of a new religion, but as the restorer of the original monotheistic faith of Abraham,

The oneness of God is prevalent in the above mentioned verses of the scriptures although it should not be considered monotheism. Monism would be a better term to explain such school of thought. Monism is found in the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rigveda, which speaks of the One being-non-being that 'breathed without breath'. The first system in Hinduism that clearly, unequivocally explicated absolute monism was that of Advaita (or nondualist) Vedanta. It is part of the six Hindu systems of philosophy, based on the Upanishads, and posits that the ultimate monad is a formless, ineffable Divine Ground called Brahman. Such monistic thought also extends to other Hindu systems like Yoga and non-dualist tantra. Another type of monism, qualified monism, admits that the universe is part of God, or Narayana, a type of either pantheism or panentheism, but sees a plurality of souls and substances within this Supreme Being. "This type of monism, monistic theism, which includes the concept of a personal God as a universal, omnipotent Supreme Being who is both Immanent and Transcendent, is prevalent in Hinduism. Monistic theism is not to be confused with absolute monotheism where God is viewed as transcendent only."<sup>18</sup> Most Hindus believe that the spirit or soul—the true "self" of every person, called the ātman—is eternal. According to the monistic/pantheistic theologies of Hinduism (such as Advaita Vedanta school), this Atman is ultimately indistinct from Brahman, the supreme spirit. Brahman is described as "The One without a Second;" hence these schools are called "non-dualist." "The goal of life according to the Advaita school is to realize that one's atman (soul) is identical to Brahman, the supreme soul."<sup>19</sup> The

"Na tasya Pratima asti"

"There is no image of Him."<sup>15</sup>

In general, Hinduism considers God not just as the Supreme All-powerful Gigantic One, Who commands the humanity to tread the way He/She/It says, but also a personal God Whom the individual can worship out of love and not necessarily out of fear ! The fear brings one only upto certain point and beyond that it repels, but love takes through to the point. Devotion or *bhakti*, as often referred to, is a very key concept in Hinduism, even for the philosophically inclined ones. "While the shashtras - be it Vedas, Bhagvad Gita, Upanishands - describe the Glory of God, one finds abundance of stories that praise the God in love."<sup>16</sup> For Hindus God, as is, is beyond any attributes of form, color, shapes. That is, God does not have any specific form or name. In this state God is referred to as *nirguna brahman* (attributeless god). However God takes forms as perceived by humans and this perceived form is called *saguna brahman* (god with (good) attributes). "These forms could range from calm to fierce to yogic. Each form has its significance."<sup>17</sup> For example, when one is depressed and sees the form of God Strong and Powerful, the seeker feels the moral boost that God would definitely be the support for the right thing. Similarly when in an auspicious ceremony, the seeker would like the God to be the calm provider of boons in a spiritually elevated state, the choice would be the yogic form of God. The forms provide a basis for the Hindu worshippers to easily pursue the otherwise incomprehensible Supreme.

us the yoga so that we may be able in our present life to attain Divine light"<sup>13</sup>

### 3 Atharvaveda

The Atharvaveda praises God in Book 20, hymn 58 and verse 3:

"Dev maha osi"

"God is verily great"<sup>14</sup>

### 4 Rigveda

The oldest of all the vedas is Rig Veda. It is also the one considered most sacred by the Hindus. The Rigveda states in Book 1, hymn 164 and verse 46: "Sages (learned Priests) call one God by many names." Rigveda 1:164:46 The Rigveda gives several different attributes to Almighty God. Many of these are mentioned in Rigveda Book 2 hymn 1.

Among the various attributes of God, one of the beautiful attributes mentioned in the Rigveda Book II hymn 1 verse 3, is Brahma. Brahma means 'The Creator'. Translated into Arabic it means Khaaliq. Muslims can have no objection if Almighty God is referred to as Khaaliq or 'Creator' or Brahma. However if it is said that Brahma is Almighty God who has four heads with each head having a crown, Muslims take strong exception to it. Describing Almighty God in anthropomorphic terms also goes against the following verse of Yajurveda:

### 1. Yajurveda

The following verses from the Yajurveda echo a similar concept of God:

"na tasya pratima asti

"There is no image of Him."<sup>9</sup>

"shudhama poapvidham"

"He is bodyless and pure."<sup>10</sup>

"Andhatama pravishanti ye asambhuti mupaste"

"They enter darkness, those who worship the natural elements" (Air, Water,

Fire, etc.). "They sink deeper in darkness, those who worship sambhuti."<sup>11</sup>

Sambhuti means created things, for example table, chair, idol, etc.

The Yajurveda contains the following prayer:

"Lead us to the good path and remove the sin that makes us stray and wander."<sup>12</sup>

2 **The Sāmaveda** consists mostly of mantras from the Rig Veda, but arranged in an order specifically suited to the Soma sacrifice

"O lord give us the knowledge to enable us to understand the instigated and auspicious deeds. O worshipful God, guide us to the righteousness or teach

"Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender according to their own natures."<sup>4</sup>

#### **UPANISHADS:**

The Hindus consider the Upanishads sacred scriptures.

The following verses from the Upanishads refer to the Concept of God:

"Ekam evadvitiam"

"He is One only without a second."<sup>5</sup>

"Na casya kascij janita na cadhipah."

"Of Him there are neither parents nor lord."<sup>6</sup>

"Na tasya pratima asti"

"There is no likeness of Him."<sup>7</sup>

The following verses from the Upanishad allude to the inability of man to imagine God in a particular form:

"Na samdrse tisthati rupam asya, na caksusa pasyati kas canainam."

"His form is not to be seen; no one sees Him with the eye."<sup>8</sup>

#### **THE VEDAS**

Vedas are considered the most sacred of all the Hindu scriptures. There are four principal Vedas: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharvaveda.

conglomerate of diverse beliefs and traditions, Hinduism has no single founder. 'It is also the world's third largest religion following Christianity and Islam, with approximately a billion adherents, of whom about 905 million live in India and Nepal. Other countries with large Hindu populations include Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.'<sup>2</sup>

Hinduism contains a vast body of scriptures. 'Divided as revealed and remembered and developed over millennia, these scriptures expound on theology, philosophy and mythology, providing spiritual insights and guidance on the practice of dharma (religious living).'<sup>3</sup> In the orthodox view, among such texts, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* are the foremost in authority, importance and antiquity. Other major scriptures include the Tantras, the sectarian Agamas, the *Puranas* and the epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*. The *Bhagavad Gītā*, a treatise excerpted from the *Mahābhārata*, is sometimes called a summary of the spiritual teachings of the *Vedas*.

The explanation of God is found in all the sacred scriptures and given a slightly different note in different places. Following are excerpts from the

### **BHAGAVAD GITA**

The most popular amongst all the Hindu scriptures is the Bhagavad Gita. Consider the following verse from the Gita:

This Qur'anic verse, although, particularly speaks to the people of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, but it is meant for people of all different religions.

It is not appropriate to try to understand a religion or the concept of God by observing its followers, for they themselves may not be aware of the religion or the concept of God, neither is it appropriate to observe or look at the traditions or the cultures of the followers of the religion because many of cultures and traditions may not be part of the religion. The best and the most authentic way to understand the concept of God in any religion is to try and figure out what the sacred scriptures have to say about them.

To gain a better understanding of the stand of Hindus on the concept of God, we can refer to Hindu sacred scriptures and analyze them. Hinduism is commonly perceived as a polytheistic religion. Indeed, most Hindus would attest to this by professing belief in multiple Gods. While some Hindus believe in the existence of three gods, some believe in thousands of gods, and some others 330 million Gods.

#### **HINDU SCRIPUTRES:**

Hinduism (known as Hindū Dharma in modern Indian languages) is a religious tradition that originated in the Indian subcontinent. In contemporary usage, Hinduism is also sometimes referred to as Sanātana Dharma, a Sanskrit phrase, meaning "eternal law". Hinduism, many of whose origins can be traced to the ancient Vedic civilization, is one of the world's oldest extant religions. A



## Concept of God in Hinduism and Islam

### In perspective of their sacred scriptures

Dr. Tahira Basharat \*

Hinduism is taken as a polytheistic religion as Hindus believe in multiple Gods. There exists a variation. Some believe that there are 3 gods, others that there are thousands of gods while some in millions of gods and demi-gods. However, the more scholarly people have firm belief in the Sovereignty of One God. The major difference in the belief of Hindus and Muslims is the ideology of Pantheism. Pantheism states everything in this world, living and non-living, Divine and Sacred. Therefore, Hindus consider everything, be it moon, snake, cow, mountain, tree, as god. Contrary to that Islam is of the belief that all the things in the world belong to God Almighty, be it sun, moon, sky, humans, animals or plants. God has everything in his power and rule. Thus, it can be concluded that the significant difference in the belief of Hinduism and Islam is the use of apostrophe's. The Hindu says everything is God. Whereas, the Muslim says, everything is God's.

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قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ  
وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا  
فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (1)

O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will).

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