

ONENESS OF GOD¹

It is said that there is One power. There is One God. But it is seen that there are many laws, many powers and many gods. We can even say that there are many Powers of light and many Powers of darkness. That is why we find that most religions speak of the One Evil-power which is opposed to the One Good God. The question about evil will be deferred for the present, though it is integrally related with the notion of God.

Rg Veda speaks about all gods as One only: Mahat devatānām asuratvam ekam.² The concept of Visśvedvāḥ is a unique presentation of the collective godhead. But it was fully realized too that the gods are all powers of the One God, the transcendent, the supreme, whom even the Gods cannot apprehend. Indeed we are told in one of the hymns that all the gods are in reality females though called males³. Thus we find

¹ Readers will find the excellent compilation of Dr. Bhagwan Das “The Essential Unit of Religions” interesting and useful. Theosophy seeks to reconcile all religions and faiths from the standpoint of Comparative Religion.

² Rg V.III.55: They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and Agni: and He is the heavenly noble winged Garuṁtmān. That which exists is One; Sages call it variously as Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan. Rg V.I.104-48. Echoing this passage Svetāśvatāra Up. “That self is indeed Agni, it is Sūrya and it is Candramas” (VI. 6): cf Īśa Up. 16 and Rg.V.I.167.4.5.6 I. 164 and 164; III.54.8; X.121, X.129. 1 etc

³ Rg V.I.164.16

that the One Supreme Transcendent, transcending, even the knowledges and powers of the gods, is the Truth, and all prayers and hymns sung to the many gods ultimately refer to Him alone. Every power of the Divine may reveal indeed does reveal itself as a personality of the Divine.

Prof Max Muller finds in the R̥g Veda a theory of Godhead, which is called by him Henotheism. Henotheism holds that each of the Gods of the Veda, terrestrial or super terrestrial or other, is considered to be Supreme for a particular occasion by the hymning R̥ṣi, and worshipped as such. this theory is designated by some as ‘opportunists Monoteism’.¹ But Henotheism must presuppose allow that the powers so apotheosized on different occasions and different functions are not competing Godheads or gods like the Gods of Mythology. The harmony of the universe will preclude any such conflicts between the powers of light. We may perceive two truths emerging from the study of the nature of the lauds made by the R̥ṣis. They are (i) that the power or God they worshipped was a perfect manifestation or perfection of the One Divine on the plane and purpose for which He is invoked, and (ii) that these powers of light derived their puissance and power and perfection, from the One Divine who contains them all and is their Source and the Supreme Unity of the World and all souls². Writes Rudolf Otto “The idea of a personal world-god

¹ For example prof. M. Hriyanna: Outlines of Indian Philosophy

² The evolutionary interpretation of most western thinkers appears to be firstly, unsustainable, and secondly, seems to conform to the modern tendency to see man’s development as the development of Reality and Truth and God

containing within Himself simultaneously every other God and also other existents, submits in just the same form in regions beyond India itself – in Tangaroa (Polynesia) for example¹. That thought in all parts of the globe will inevitably resolve the multiplicity by trying them up in unity is a significant fact. Henotheism is this tying up of all powers and perfections of the Divine in a unique practical manner for the purpose of fruits and gains, successes and achievements of different kinds. The religious intuitions is two – wayed. It is integral and practical. As integral it perceives Unity: and as practical it perceives the function and utility of each one of that many in that which is integrally One.

Whilst a superficial observation of the activities of the primitives and even of their concepts might lead to the conclusion that theirs is a polytheism that leads to monotheism, from multiplicity to unity, that the worship of the many has finally led to the worship of the One which contains all the many, which is, by the way, the sanest development, it is to be considered that the higher religions are not, because of these facts of modern ethnological and comparative religious science to be considered to be evolutions from such beginnings. Rather it may be otherwise; that is, these primitive beliefs in an universal Mana, orenda, adṛṣṭa, grace and others, which are diversified in almost all types of objects of the world as totem and taboo, as their mystic or magical power to injure or to increase, may be considered to be unconscious intuitions into the real nature of Spirit. As it has been soundly laid down.

¹ *Original Gītā*: Rudolf Otto. P.151. Arjuna's Viśvarūpa-darśana of Kṛṣṇa is even like the vision of Prahlāda, and is fundamental to all religionmystical experience of God as Sarva, and Sarva dehin or Sarvaśaaīrin as Rāmānuja described Him. This vision is a simultaneous time-vision.

by Prof. MacDougal "We must read development backward and not forward; we must find the key to the meanings of the first stage in the last¹," Mystics have always placed the last stage at the very first, for, from the psychological standpoint, the last stage it is that makes the first overt stage possible, the first overt stage being in most cases, unconscious of the true purpose and power that initiated its manifestation. The subtle precedes the gross, manifesting itself subliminally to the consciousness. And this is the reason why the primitives are only subliminally aware of the true nature of Spirit which is the One that contains the Many. Likewise are we conscious of the Spirit transcendental which our minds cannot reach or define as existent or nonexistent even, but by which power alonw our minds are capable of knowing anything a at all. Thus it is a sound psychological sense that makes religion accept the Unit which is the significance and purpose of the many powers. It si with that central unity that

man has to establish right relationships and not with the many powers as such, for that is their source, strength, support and sustenance. "Henotheism is an appearance rather than a reality, an appearance produced by the indefiniteness due to undeveloped anthropomorphism²", said Prof. MacDonnell and we must say that it may not be due to any lack of development.

¹ *Philosophical Basis of Theism*: James Hicks; (Quoted by) p.35

² *Vedic Mythology*: p.17; cf *Origins of Religion and Language* Cook p.38 who does not subscribe to the view of Max Muller. Prof. Keiggi accepts the Henotheistic view (*Rg Veda*: p.26), Prof S.N.Dasgupta considers it to be of no importance. (*History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol.I.p.17). Prof. Hiriyanna points out "Opportunist Monotheism is not the idea behind them (the Vedic Ṛṣi)." (*Outlines of Indian Philosophy*)

but due to the subliminal character of the presented unity. For constantly at every level this subliminal vagueness persists, even when men have arrived at a full vision of the final reality. The nature of the Deity transcends all formulations and presentations; and the Ultimate Mystery of the One-many relationship continues with unabated strength.

Thus it would not be proper to interpret the Rg Veda as progressing from polytheism through Henotheism to Monotheism as Comparative Religion would like to do. Evolution in our knowledge of God may not involve evolution in the nature of God. God displays manifold activities, which are increased according to the types of activities or creativities that man is permitted to execute, Natural Moral and Spiritual activities are the three fundamental activities. Corresponding to these the religious Object or God displays infinite Wisdom. Justice and Power. God is also the leader since man is blind to so many things, And He leads through knowledge and vision and He is the Teacher, inspirer and revealer of the Path to the manifold souls. Reality or the Universe is a multidimensional existence, of space and time and beyond space and time, natural, mechanical,

biological, moral; mental, celestial and mystical. All these, informed by One Divinity are to be known as One Brahman¹.

A full and integral knowledge however will arrive at the comprehensive understanding of the Divine Nature and may

¹ The Vaiśvānara Vidya in Satapatha Brāhmaṇa X.v. (otherwise known as Agni-rahasyopaniṣad), and Ch. Up. Indeed explains the truth even as the story of Eight blind men and the Elephant does..

not refuse reality to the manyness, eternity and infinity of the Divine Nature or even the manifestation of these infinities of the Divine Nature, though it will be more inclined to the experience of the many in the One. This is but right, for all true knowledge can have significance and wholeness and unity and structure or the experience of fullness only in and by the One, or the identity-factor in all the infinite and eternal and multiple manifestations. This is the cardinal truth of Advaita but fully articulated only in an Organic theory or integral Synthesis.

The doctrine of relativity between the gods is possible only when we exalt certain functions or perfections, expressions or manifestations, planes or dimensions of Spirit over others. Such exaltations will be tied down to utilities. We cannot escape from that fact. But, foundationally speaking, it would be wrong to exalt certain powers over the rest. Only the One Supreme Transcendent, who pervades over these gods and is their identity or Unity or Self has the right to be called Supreme and Absolute in relation to these. Evolutionarily speaking, we find the One infinite pervading all, enveloping all, leading all through His earthy, mid-atmospheric and celestial powers, uniquely and well.

Thus on the whole, we find that speaking about the nature of the Deity as emerging from the Vedic practice and praise, the Ṛṣis were fully and integrally conscious of the power, wisdom and law of the One Divine, and these were

typified by three powers Agni, Indra and Varuṇa (or Vāyu). No doubt already we find a host of abstract deities, so – called by the western savants who found personification of the functions of the Deity, such as Dhātā, Nidhātā, Trātā, and others. Thus we see that a full understanding was presented to the theological hymnist about the integral nature of the Deity he was experiencing. There is One Universe: One Power governs that universe, even as there is but One maker and creator and sustainer and destroyer. The Nāsad āsid Hymn (Rg V.X.129.) summarises in one sense the fullest purposes of the Deity as Prajāpati. Later the Vedānta Sūtras (I.i.2) also proclaim the primary nature of God to be Cause of Creation and other processes.