

The Purpose of Creation (part 3 of 3): The Hindu Tradition

Description: An introduction to the most puzzling question of human history, and a discussion about the sources which can be used to find the answer. Part 3: A look into the Hindu Scriptures, and a conclusion to the subject.

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Everything is God

The Hindu scriptures teach that there are many gods, incarnations of gods, persons of God and that everything is God, Brahman. In spite of the belief that the self (atman) of all living beings is actually Brahman, an oppressive caste system evolved in which the Brahmans, the priestly caste, possess spiritual supremacy by birth. They are the teachers of the Vedas and represent the ideal of ritual purity and social prestige. On the other hand, the Sudra caste are excluded from religious status and their sole duty in life is "to serve meekly" the other three castes and their thousands of subcastes.

According to Hindu monist philosophers, humankind's purpose is the realization of their divinity and -following a path (marga) to emancipation (moksha) from the wheel of rebirth - the reabsorption of the human soul (atman) into the ultimate reality, Brahman. For those following the bhakti path, the purpose is to love God because God created humankind to "enjoy a relationship - as a father enjoys his children" (Srimad Bhagwatam). For the ordinary Hindu, the main aim of worldly life lies in conforming to social and ritual duties, to the traditional rules of conduct for one's caste - the karma path.

Although most of the religion of the Vedic texts, which revolves around rituals of fire sacrifice, has been eclipsed by Hindu doctrines and practices found in other texts, the absolute authority and sacredness of the Veda remains a central tenet of virtually all Hindu sects and traditions. The Veda is composed of four collections, the oldest of which is the Rigveda ("Wisdom of the Verses"). In these texts, God is described in the most confusing terms. The religion reflected in the Rigveda is a polytheism mainly concerned with appeasing deities associated with the sky and the atmosphere, the most important of which were Indra (god of the heavens and rain), Baruna (guardian of the cosmic order), Agni (the sacrificial fire), and Surya (the Sun). In later Vedic texts, interest in the early Rigvedic gods declines, and polytheism begins to be replaced by a sacrificial pantheism to Prajapati ("Lord of Creatures"), who is the All. In the Upanishads (secret teachings concerning cosmic equations), Prajapati merges with the concept of Brahman, the supreme reality and substance of the universe, replacing any specific personification, thus transforming the mythology into abstract philosophy. If the contents of these scriptures were all that human beings had to choose from for guidance, one would have to conclude that God hid both Himself and the purpose of creation from humankind.

God is not the author of confusion, nor does He wish difficulty for mankind. Consequently, when He revealed His final communication to humankind one thousand four hundred years ago, He ensured that it was perfectly preserved for all of the generations of human beings to come. In that final scripture, the Quran (Koran), God revealed His purpose for creating mankind and, through His last prophet, He clarified all of the details which man could comprehend. It is on the basis of this revelation and the prophetic explanations that we [must] analyze the precise answers to the question "Why did God create man?"...

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