

### Group 3

#### The God Conference and God as the Parent of Humankind

#### God as Parents, A Hindu Perspective

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*You are the Mother*

*You are the Father*

*You are the family*

*You are the friend*

*You are the wisdom*

*You are the wealth*

*You are my god*

*You are my all in all*

This is the most popular religious prayer of the Hindus. The paper will briefly explore the idea of God as parents in Hindu religious tradition. (It might have interesting resonance to the theological scheme of the Moonies).

One of the earliest Upanisads narrates the story of the Absolute Reality, Brahman, being lonely at the top without a second, who fell from its high pedestal into two beings as *pati* and *patni*, the husband and a wife in the human form. Their copulating made the female shy. She hid under a transformed appearance as an animal. The male followed her in the male form of the same species. The couple endlessly continued their play. And thus manifested the variegated creation in our world.

This ontological narrative then gave birth to a long process of metaphysical understanding of the Absolute Being as a couple and their relationship,—male and female, *purusa* and *prakriti*, Brahma and Maya, god and world, Atma and Paramatma, substance and attribute, *saktiman* (potent) and *sakti* (potency) and so on. Their relationship is understood as

purely non-different (*abheda*), or purely different (*bheda*) or somewhere in between as different-non different (*bhedabheda*). The last category, however fuzzy it may seem logically, is most subscribed in the Hindu family of thought and religion.

The religious consciousness of humans, understands the divine in its own image, either as a male or a female. But that was an incomplete understanding. The divine to be complete has to be a pair of male-female. As in the human arena of relationship, the most immediate and intimate relationship is between a husband and wife, which has its unique role as a parent.

On the other hand, the human experience of completeness originates from the divine couple. Human experience is in the image of the divine, who function as a teacher or the 'creator'. Sociologically speaking, the human society is understood as the body of god as a Social Being. Which on an individual level has a system of organic growth. This is practised by the Hindus as *varna* (class) and *ashram* (different stations in ones life) system.

A typical lifespan of hundred years is divided into four *ashrams* or the stations of 25 years each. First is *brahmacharya* or period of learning. Second is *grihastha* or a householder. Third is *vanaprastha* or the state of voluntary retirement. Final is *sannyas* or the total renunciation from and social obligations.

Traditionally, it is a householder who is the axis of any society. The religious rites and duties are obligations of a householder. The unique institution of a guru, specifically those with ritual priestly duties, is in the domain of the married men and women. A Hindu traditionally grows thru a series of sacraments. Marriage is the most central and elaborate sacramental ritual. The vows taken at the time of marriage are the foundation of the spiritual and social life of a Hindu. Marriage works as a bedrock of a family. The various forms of relationships in a family/social setting like servants, children, parents, friends are training ground for a devotee's relationship with the divine. Devotion or bhakti manifests as dasya, sakhya, vatsalya culminating in the madhurya mode.