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## DESCRIPTION OF GOD(S) IS LITERALLY THE SAME IN RELIGION AND SCIENCE

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**Abstract:** Presently, the population of this planet follow at least 17 religions. Twelve religions (three dharmic, three Abrahamic, three modern and three ancient), being practiced by approximately 75% of the world's population, are compared on various aspects with an aim to see similarities and differences, if any, regarding the description of God(s). While little differences amongst the religions studied have been observed, several common features have also been noted. A section of the present-day Physicists believes in the existence of superior intelligence (SupInt) to human intelligence (HumInt). Upon comparison, the concept of God(s) in various religions is discussed considering the SupInt. For once, the description of God(s) in different religions matches with the concept of SupInt in Physics. Comparison of the statuses of both genders in the religions studied, was a spin-off. No difference in the treatment meted out with respect to each of the genders in different religions was observed. Significance of this study lies in the observation that the present study aids the spiritual/religious/philosophical (SRP) counsellors in providing a more holistic counselling to their subjects considering the recent developments in science.

**Key words:** Religions; Comparison; Common; Differences, God, Dimensions, Dharmic, Abrahamic, Ancient, Modern, Spiritual, Religious, Philosophical, Counselling.

## 1. Introduction

Excluding atheism, at least 17 different religions are practiced by citizens of this planet (Warf and Vincent 2007, 597-613; Maoz and Henderson 2013, 265-291; Johnson and Grim 2021). While all the religions acknowledge the existence of God(s), in some form or the other, there are variations among the description of exact nature and personification of God(s). In the present study, the author was interested in getting a grasp of description about the nature of God essentially to correlate the same with the various dimensions identified by the modern-day physicists, an aspect on which the author has been interested since at least the year 2017. Also, studies have clearly shown that spiritual/religious/philosophical (SRP) counselling greatly aids both psychological and physiological outcomes during medical therapy, and in maintaining a positive mental health in general (Julianne J. Ross, Gerard A. Kennedy, and Francis Macnab 2015, 1-23). Therefore, SRP counselling is recommended as a standard component of assessments during therapeutic interventions.

Towards comparing the descriptions of God(s), at least nine religions were selected based on the number of adherents all over the world. These are three dharmic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism), three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and three modern religions (Sikhism, Bahai and Raëlian). In addition, three ancient religions (Vedic, Cult of Isis, and Zoroastrianism) were also included. Zoroastrianism is still being practiced in at least two countries (Iran and India) with more than 2.6 million adherents (Warf and Vincent 2007, 597-613). Together, approximately 75% of the present-day world population follow any one of the ten religions included in this study excluding Vedic religion and the Cult of Isis. It may be noted that Vedic religion gradually transformed into Hinduism albeit in a slightly modified form. Also, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism are two religions which share not only the language in which their scriptures were written but also the beliefs and practices to a certain extent. Furthermore, Marcin Stonawski et al. (Stonawski 2015, 101-16) predict that the number of adherents of religions included (excluding Vedic & Cult of Isis) will increase to 81.4% by the year 2050 CE. Thus, it makes sense to study these religions not only from a personal perspective but also from an SRP counselling point of view.

Earlier workers comparing the religions were mostly topic specific (perhaps like the present) (Dag Øistein Endsjø 2011; Crandall 2012; Anonymous 2021c) or were more interested in the distribution of religions on a global scale during a given period (Warf & Vincent 2007, 597-613; Maoz & Henderson 2013, 265-91; Marcin Stonawski et al. 2015, 101-16). While Warf and Vincent (2007, 597-613) examined the diversity of religions at a global scale, Dag Øistein Endsjø (2011) did a similar study with specific reference to sex or coitus in religion. Crandall's (2012) study

involved a comparison of five religions about the role of women in religion (gender-based study). Whereas Maoz and Henderson (2013, 265-291) studied the religious diversity across the globe between 1945 and 2010, future size and composition of religious groups was the theme of Marcin Stonawski *et al.* (2015, 101-16).

Whatever might be the case, cumulative findings of the earlier studies can be summarized as three points. These are:

(1) All religions acknowledge the existence of God(s).

(2) All religions accept that for procreation, heterosexual vaginal entry is essential; and

(3) All religions confer an inferior status to women and treat them as one property of males.

The reasons proffered by the earlier authors for conclusions made in their respective studies are varied and many. While the present study does not dispute the findings made in the earlier studies, it includes other aspects essentially to serve as a ready reckoner for subsequent studies either by the present author or for SRP counsellors. The Oracle Institute's comparison of five major religions is limited and does not make any conclusions, at least regarding the information accessible to the public (Anonymous, 2021c). Warf and Vincent (2007, 597-613) in their thesis debunk some popular beliefs regarding religious diversity. They concluded that China, India, Russia, Japan, and Indonesia are more religiously diverse than the commonly believed USA. On the other hand, Maoz and Henderson (2013:265-291) generate a dataset on various approved parameters with the intention that it will be of use to future researchers (a concept which the present study also shares) while opening a debate on diversity of religions. Nevertheless, their study encompasses a period of 65 years wherein they observed that the world became more diverse after the second world war (WW2). However, none of these comparative studies give a description of how God was described in various religions. Also, none of the studies compared the roles of both genders simultaneously which this study tries to.

The important additional facets included in the present study are: (1) Original Concepts (Mono/Duo/Polytheism) of founding the religions; (2) Present day concept of God(s); (3) Stratification of the society; (4) Belief in Reincarnation; (5) Path to Salvation and (6) Statuses of Males and Females. Emphasis here was mostly on the concept and nature of God(s) for the simple reason presently a significant fraction of Physicists (Meta physicists) acknowledges the existence of a superior intelligence (SupInt) to human intelligence (HumInt) (Hawking and Mlodinov 2010; Poduri 2017, 335-336; Vashishtha 2020). Inclusion of comparison of statuses of genders (males and females) has profound implications in countries like India which are contemplating introduction of gender-based reservations/quotas (affirmative action) either in job sector or in the education sector.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Accessing the information:

To achieve the comparison of religions, initially about 22 to 26 facets have been identified based on descriptions of each of the religions at various sources. Comparison Tables were prepared and information regarding each of these religions has been accessed from the internet in general, Google Scholar searches and the online British Council Library, India, essentially using religion names as keywords. From amongst the numerous results obtained, only those listed in the references were consulted based on the simple presentation of the content and lesser usage of complex theological terminology.

Comparison Tables.

Five tables were prepared as follows.

Table 1 lists 22 facets and involves six religions (the three dharmic and the three Abrahamic).

**Table 1. Comparison of Various Facets of Major Religions.**

Sl. N°.	Facet	Religion					
		Dharmic Religions			Abrahamic Religions		
		Hinduism	Buddhism <sup>^</sup>	Jainism <sup>@</sup>	Judaism	Christianity <sup>(++)</sup>	Islam
1	Origins*	4000 BCE	500 BCE	500 BCE ^^	3760 BCE	30 CE	622 CE
2	% of believers***	13.3%	5.9%	0.1%	0.2%	33.1%	20.3%
3	Evolved From	Vedic	Hinduism	Hinduism (?)/ Sramana Tradition	Animism	Judaism	Judaism/ Christianity
4	Founder	7 Sages/Saptarishis	Gautama Buddha	Mahavira	Abraham	Jesus Christ	Prophet Mohamed
5	Geographic location of origin	Mostly in the region between Egypt and India	India	India	Mediterranean region	Israel	Saudi Arabia
6	Original concept	Polytheism	Realms of God and Humans	Polytheism	Polytheism (")	Monotheism	Henotheism
7	Present day concept of God(s)	Many	Realms of God and Humans	Eternal	1 (")	Polytheism**	1
8	Scripture(s)	Vedas	Tripitakas	Agamas	3-Ṭṣ^^^	Bible	Koran
9	God (personification)	Both ♂ & ♀	Only realm of God	Both ♂ & ♀	Both ♂ & ♀/ Neither ♂ & ♀ (Modern concept)	Both ♂ & ♀	Formless
10	Name of God	Many	Only realms of God and Humans	Many	Eloah (Hebrew)	Elahi (Aramaic)	Allah (Arabic)
11	Nature of God	Varied	Neutral	Eternal	Judgemental	Benevolent	Benevolent
12	Idol Worship	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	NP	Permitted	NP
13	Place of Worship	Temple	Temple	Temple	Temple	Church	Mosque
14	Holiest Place(s)	Many places in India	Both Gaya	Many places in India	Jerusalem/Israel	Jerusalem/Bethlehem	Mecca/Medina
15	High Priest	Jeevar	Dalai Lama	Gurudev	Rabbi	Pope	Caliph/Avatollah

16	Names of Castes/Sects	Kshatriyas/Brahmins/Vaishyas/Sudras	Monastics & Laymen	Digambar & Svetambara	Karaite/Rabbinic	Catholics/Protestants	Sunnis/Shias
17	Daily calendar	Lunar based (many)	Lunisolar	Lunisolar	Lunisolar	Solar	Lunar
18	Calendar start date	23 January 3102 BCE <sup>(*)</sup>	11 March 545 BCE	7 October 527 BCE	7 October 3761 BCE	1 January 45 BCE	CE 16 July 622
19	Belief in Reincarnation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
20	Path to Salvation	Karma	Karma	Moksha Marg	Good works	Jesus	Charity & Submission to God
21	Nature of Afterlife	Heaven/Rebirth	Nirvana	Heaven/Rebirth	Earth Plane	Heaven	Heaven
22	Ability to join God	No	Maybe	Yes/Jina	No	Yes	Yes

Notes: (++) — Borrows the concept of virgin birth from the Cult of Isis (see Table 3); (\*\*) — The first temple at Elephantine, Egypt had many Gods (both ♂ & ♀) including Yahweh, but the modern Judaism believes in only one God; (X) — Coincides with return of Lord Krishna to his eternal abode; \* — Approximate date of origin; \*\* — Although Jesus Christ proposed the existence of a single God, later day Roman Catholic Church created the Trinity, the Satan, Holy Mary and many more in addition to Jesus himself. Thus, Christianity, in theory, is a Polytheistic religion, and many also involve idol worship as evidenced by numerous images of Jesus, Holy Mary and Saints in various Churches worldwide; \*\*\* — Based on Warf and Vincent 2007: 597 – 613; Marcin Stonawski et al. 2015: 101-116; @ — Based on some archaeological excavations, Jainism is believed to be in existence since the Vedic times. While the exact date of origin is unknown, some believe that it is an off-shoot of Hinduism having co-evolved along with Buddhism to counter the Brahminical influence; ^ — Off-shoot of Hinduism; ^^ — Debatable; ^^ — 3-Ts = Tanakh-Torah-Talmud; ♀ — Female; ♂ — Male; BCE — Before Common Era; CE — Common Era; NA — Not Allowed; N° — Number; NP — Not permitted; Other abbreviations carry their usual significance.

Source: This table is collated from information present in the references: Wylen 2000; Ananthanarayanan 2004; Warf and Vincent 2007:597-613; Wagner 2008; Dag Øistein Endsjø 2011; Crandall 2012; Doggett 2012; Abbott 2014; Anonymous 2014; Anonymous 2021b; 2021c; 2021e; 2021f; 2021g; 2021h; Silberman et al., 2021; Mehdi et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2021; S. Michael Houdmann 2021.

Table 2 attempts to compare the views of the six religions listed in Table 1 regarding the two genders — males and females. The concepts of additional genders appear to be modern and may not be in vogue when many of the religions were founded. All individuals were blindly classified either as male or female. Transgenders were traditionally included as females who cannot conceive (at least in countries like India).

Table 2. Comparison of various views of the major religions regarding men/males (♂) and women/females (♀).

Sl. N°.	Facet	Religion						
		Dharmic Religions			Abrahamic Religions			
		Hinduism	Buddhism	Jainism	Judaism	Christianity	Islam	
1	Document governing daily lives	Upanishads	Tripitakas	Agamas	Talmud	Bible	Hadith/Sharia	
	Status	Superior						
	Reason for the status	Donor of 'Seed'						
	Role in the Society	Decision makers/Head of the family/Breadwinners/Protectors of the Society (Son/Husband/Father)						
2	Men (♂)	Circumcision	NM <sup>®</sup>	Forbidden	Forbidden	8 <sup>th</sup> day of life	Banned	Practised <sup>##</sup>
	Prescription for life	Marriage	Ascetism	Ascetism	Marriage	Ascetism	Marriage	
	Polygyny	Allowed	Allowed	No stance	Allowed	NA	Allowed	
	Birth control for ♂	NA	NI	NI	NA	Practiced	NM <sup>(?)</sup>	
	Women (♀)	Status*	Inferior					
	Reason for the status	Purity of race & caste	Bad Karma	Bad Karma	Purity of race & caste	Sexual beings, unidimensional	Women need protection	
	Role in the society	Homemaker/Wife/Mother (Property of Men)						
	Dress code	Purdah	Shaved head	Shaved head	Defined	None	Veil/Hijab/ <u>Burkah</u>	
	Religious Education	NA	NA	NA	NA	Permitted	Compulsory	
	Prescription for life	Marriage	Ascetism	Ascetism	Marriage	Ascetism	Marriage	
	Virginity clause	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
	Dowry	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present as <u>Mehr</u>	
	Groom selection	PD/ED	PD	BD/FD	FD	Assent of both parties	Can take their own decision	
3	Women (♀)	Polyandry	Permitted in lower castes	NA	NA	NA	NA <sup>###</sup>	NA
	Birth control <sup>®</sup> for ♀	Allowed <sup>†</sup>	Allowed <sup>†</sup>	NI	Allowed for women with at least one child	Opposed as <u>Coitus interruptus</u>	NM <sup>###</sup>	
	Abortion	NA	NA <sup>(?)</sup>	NA	Permitted <sup>###</sup>	Not opposed <sup>§</sup>	NM <sup>###</sup>	
	Divorce	Allowed	Allowed	Taboo	NA	NA <sup>(??)</sup>	Permitted	
	Remarriage	NA	Permitted	NI	NA	Permitted	Permitted	
	Rape	One form of marriage <sup>***</sup>	NI, but reported in various Buddhist countries	Disapprove	Clearly defined as violence against women	Difficult to define as adultery and prostitution permitted	Difficult to define as sexual freedom of men is accepted	

Inheritance	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Women in religion	NA	No restrictions	Restricted	Restricted	Restricted <sup>55</sup>	NM <sup>55</sup>

Notes: # — Modern concept; ## — Preferably by the 15<sup>th</sup> year of life; ### — But, prostitution is legal in many Christian countries.; \$ — Opposed more in ancient times as it concealed adultery and as a form of birth control; \$\$ — Women cannot be high priests or pope; \$\$\$ — No specific mention regarding birth control or abortion or women as caliphs/ayatollahs in Quran; (+) — Prophet Mohammed is believed to have advised men not to have many children; (•) — Not allowed as it involves the killing of ‘sentient’ being; (••) — Judaism permits abortion prior to the 40<sup>th</sup> day of pregnancy as the fetus is formless until then; (•••) — till 18<sup>th</sup> century; \* — Incidentally both Hinduism and Judaism (in their scriptures) consider females to be more intelligent than males. See text; \*\*\* — Hindus have 8 different types of marriage. *Evsacha* and *Rakshasa* types involve abduction/kidnapping of the girl without the consent of her parents and are in vogue even today; @ — Usually not permitted but in recent times permitted for medical reasons.

~ — In modern times owing to civil laws in various countries, permitted; ♀ — Women/Female; ♂ — Men/Male; **BD** — Bride’s decision; **ED** — Elder’s decision; **FD** — Father’s decision; **NA** — Not allowed; **NI** — No information; **NM** — No mention; **PD** — Parent’s decision; Other abbreviations carry their usual significance.

Source: This table is collated from information present in the references: Wylie 2000; Ananthanarayanan 2004; Wagner 2008; Dag Øistein Endsjø 2011; Crandall 2012; Abbott 2014; Anonymous 2014; Anonymous 2021b; 2021c; 2021e; 2021f; 2021g; Silberman et al., 2021; Mahdi et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2021; S. Michael Houdmann 2021.

Table 3 compares three ancient religions (Vedic, Cult of Isis, and Zoroastrianism) on at least 25 facets. As mentioned earlier Vedic religion transformed in due course into Hinduism, a religion that is practiced by at least one billion adherents all over the world today (Warf & Vincent, 2007, 597-613; Marcin Stonawski et al. 2015, 101-16). Zoroastrianism is being followed, even today, by at least 2.6 million people in at least two countries (Iran and India) and the rest of the world (Warf and Vincent 2007, 597-613). Therefore, it makes sense to include Zoroastrianism in Table 1. But owing to the size limitations regarding the word processing software used (Windows 365/MS-Office), the author felt it prudent to include Zoroastrianism in table 3. Since, these three ancient religions treat men and women equally, and clubbed with the fact that two of these religions are extinct now, it does not make any sense to prepare a separate table (like Table 2) regarding the status and roles of genders.

Table 3. Comparison of Ancient Religions

Sl. No.	Facet	Ancient Religion		
		Vedic <sup>5</sup>	Cult of Isis	Zoroastrianism
			Extinct	Currently practised in Iran/India and perhaps USA. Total followers: 2.6 mn.
1	Origins*	7000 BCE	4000 B.C.E – 700 BCE	3500 BCE
2	Evolved From	Animism (?)	Animism	Animism (?)
3	Founder	7 Sages/Santarishis	Isis	Zarathustra
4	Geographic location of origin	Mostly in the region between Egypt and India	Egypt	Persia
5	Type of religion	Duo theism (a female goddess and a male fire god/Agni)	Polytheism	Dualism
6	No. of Deities	2	3	2
7	Scripture(s)	Vedas	No information	Avesta
8	Language	Sanskrit	No information	Sanskrit
9	God (personification)	Both ♂ & ♀	Both ♂ & ♀	♂ as Fire
10	Name of God	Great Goddess & Agni	Isis-Osiris-Horus	Ahura Mazda (Fire God)
11	Nature of God	Symbol of Fertility	Holy Family	Supreme
12	Opposing Deity	Asuras/Rakshasas	None	Angra Mainyu
13	Idol Worship	Permitted	Permitted	No. But, Fire worship permitted
14	Place of Worship	Temple	Temples	No temple only Sun Worship. In recent times Fire Temples (Atash-gah).
15	Holiest Place(s)	Indus Valley	Egypt	Pir-e-Sabz, Iran/Udvada, Gujrat, India
16	High Priest	Many	Many	Dastur
17	N°. of Divisions/Septs/Castes in the society	3	No information	3
18	Names of primary divisions/sects/castes	Kshatriyas/Brahmins/Vaishyas	No information	Traditionalist/Modernist/Restorationist
19	Men & Women	Considered Equal	Equal	Considered Equal
20	Purity of Women	No information	Pure/Fertile/Parthenogenic birth	Impure owing to menstruation and Childbirth
21	Calendar/Start Date	--	--	Fixed (365 days)/1738 BC
22	Believe in reincarnation	Yes	No information	Yes
23	Path to Salvation	Karma	No information	3-Fold: Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds
24	Nature of Afterlife	Heaven/Rebirth	No information	Behesht /Rebirth
25	Ability to Join God	No	No information	Yes

Notes: \$ — Evolved into Hinduism; \* — Approximate date of origin; BCE — Before Common Era, mn — Million; N°. — Number; Other abbreviations and symbols carry their usual significance.

Source: This table is collated from information present in the references: Robinson 1996; Eduljee 2005; Orthodoxzoroastrian 2011; Crandall 2012; Doggett 2012; Gray 2021.

Modern Religions are defined for the present as those religions that evolved after 1500 CE. Table 4 gives a comparison of the modern religions like Sikhism, Bahai and Raëlianism on at least 18 different facets. Although Raëlianism is classified as a ‘secte’ by the French government, it is followed by more than 100,000 people worldwide as on 2018 (Anonymous, 2021d) and hence was included in the present study. It may be noted that these three modern religions are still evolving and that finding information for some of the aspects listed in tables 1 and 2 was found to be difficult as they did not have any stance or concept. So, the necessity to prepare a separate Table 4 for Modern Religions arises. For example, the Bahai Faith has no stance on polygamy (multiple marriages for either males or females) (Anonymous 2021a; The Bahai Faith 2021). Similarly, the concept of marriage itself does not exist for Raëlians. Also, Raëlians believe in the concept of human cloning (Anonymous 2021d; 2021i).

Table 4. Comparison of Modern Religions

Sl. No.	Facet	Sikhism	Bahai Faith	Raëlians
1	Exact year of origin	1526 CE	1844 CE	1974 CE
2	% of believers ***	0.4%	0.1%	> 100 k
3	Evolved From	Hinduism/Islam	Shaykhi sect/Shia/Islam	Earlier religions like Judaism/Christianity/Buddhism
4	Founder	Guru Nanak	The Ba'b	Claude Vorilhon (Raël)
5	Type of religion	Monotheistic	Strictly monotheism	Polytheism
6	Nº. of Deities	1	1	Infinity
7	Scripture(s)	Mul mantar/Guru Granth Sahib	Kitáb-i-Aqdas	Bible/Chariots of God
8	Language	Gurmukhi	Arabic	French/English
9	God (personification)	Nirankari (Shapeless)	No personification	ET/UFO/Angel hair
10	Name of God	Waheguru (Wondrous Teacher)	All-Powerful/All-Loving	Elohim
11	Nature of God	Nirankari (Shapeless)	Omnipresent/Omniscient/imperishable	Extra-terrestrial
12	Idol Worship	Prohibited	No	Maybe
13	Place of Worship	Gurdwara	Temple	Raëlian Church
14	Holiest Place(s)	Amritsar, Punjab, India.	Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, Acre, Israel	Puy de Lassolas, France
15	High Priest	Guru/Sant/Giani	No Priests	Raël
16	Men & Women	♂ - Singh (Lion)/♀ - Kaur (Princess)	No information	Considered equal
17	Calendar/Start Date	Solar/Nanakshahi/ 14 Mar 1469 CE	Bahá'í calendar/ 21 March 1844 CE	Raëlian calendar/ 6 August 1945 AH
18	Ability to join God	Jeevanmukti/Karma	Inaccessible	Yes (by meeting the ETs)

- **Footnotes:** The number of facets listed in this table is less than those in Table 1. For many aspects of these modern religions, information was surprisingly difficult to access as these religions seem to be still evolving and some facets listed in Table 1 or 2 are not yet described by these religions. For example, Bahais have no stance on polygamy (multiple marriages either for males or females). Also, Raëlians believe that humans cannot be bound by marriage.
- **Note:** \*\*\* — Based on Warf and Vincent 2007:597-613; Marcin Stonawski et al. 2015: 101–16; > — greater than; ♀ — Females/women; ♂ — Males/men; AH — "après Hiroshima" ("after Hiroshima"); CE — Common Era; ET — Extra Terrestrials; k — thousand; UFO — Unidentified flying object; Other abbreviations and symbols carry their usual significance.
- **Source:** This table is collated from information present in the references: Warf and Vincent 2007:597-613; Anonymous 2009; Doggett 2012; Marcin Stonawski et al. 2015: 101–16; Anonymous 2021a; 2021h; 2021i; 2021j; The Bahai Faiths 2021.

The concept of human cloning (which does not involve coitus) does not exist in any of the remaining 11 religions studied for the present. Agreed that Hindus might cite the example of the birth of Kauravas (of Mahabharata fame) as an example for Human cloning, but the present author opines that the Kauravas are more of test tube babies rather than being the products of human cloning. Wherefore, it is a topic best avoided for the present. Similarly, genetically modified organisms/foods (GMO/Fs) are not accepted as per the civil law in many countries which again the Raëlians accept. This concept of GMO/Fs is not seen in the scriptures of

any of the other 11 religions included in the study. Accordingly, not all facets that appear in table 1 are included in table 4.

Again, some of the aspects are not clearly defined in modern religions, as either dharmic or the Abrahamic religions do for the superior status of males. This situation clearly reflects the changing times. Therefore, no separate table on comparison of status and roles of different sexes has been prepared for these three modern religions.

Table 5 essentially lists the 12 different dimensions currently accepted by the scientific community and are believed to be working at sub-atomic levels (Marais *et al.*, 2018, 20180640; Ang 2020). Table 5 was included with the intention to act as a cross-reference table for the non-physicists among the readers and does not serve any other purpose in the present study.

All the columns and rows in each of the tables were filled sequentially from the information available in the references consulted and were presented keeping in mind the best interests of each of the religions included. It must be noted that the intention of this study is not to serve as an advertisement for any one religion or to show a particular religion in poor light. Also, the author offers his apologies in advance should any person/reader feel that their religion has been insulted or projected negatively.

Although Wikipedia is not considered a standard reference by many standard journals and editors, the present author feels that since Wikipedia is instantly accessible by the laity, it makes sense to include Wikipedia in studies like the present wherein one of the aims is to serve as a ready reckoner for the SRP counsellors.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Crudely put, the number of adherents of the religions included in the present study constitute more than 75% of the world's populace as on 2010 CE (Marcin Stonawski *et al.* 2015, 101–16). Thus, in the authors' opinion, this study forms one snapshot of the religions studied and thereby suffice as an instant reference. Far-eastern religions like Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism are not included in the current study for the simple reason in their present form they are heavily influenced by Buddhism (Crandall 2012). Also, many people living in Japan, China and other Southeast Asian nations follow dual religions (Maoz and Henderson 2013:265-291). Therefore, it does not make any sense to include them as Buddhism is already included in Tables 1 and 2. This argument gains prominence when we consider the fact that a significant number of world's population who follow these Buddhist influenced religions live either in China, Japan, or many of the Southeast Asian nations.

In the present study, the commonalities observed are mostly regarding the nature, and personification of God(s), and statuses of both the genders. So, it becomes essential to discuss these two aspects – one concerning God(s) and the other concerning humans – separately.

### 3.1. God(s) and the Dimensions

While the religions founded prior to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE believed in the existence of many God(s), with the sole exception of Buddhism, the later day religions mostly professed monotheism apart from Raëlianism. For example, in Table 1 we observe that all religions, except for Buddhism and Christianity, started off with Polytheism as their central tenet. But later day clergy converted Judaism and Islam into monotheistic religions (Wylen 2000; Crandall 2012; Abbot 2014; Anonymous 2021c; Silberman *et al.*, 2021).

The first temple of Judaism at Elephantine, Egypt, had multiple Gods including Zeus and Yahweh. It also included Goddesses (Crandall 2012). Put simply, Judaism in its original form was a polytheistic religion which today came to be monotheistic. Also, while the first temple of Judaism involved idol worship (an indication that God was gender-personified), the modern-era Jews believe in a shapeless, neutral, and eternal God (Abbott 2014).

Purists might argue that Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said that there is one and only one God. But the very existence of the controversial Satanic Verses (not the one written by Salman Rushdie) as early as 618 CE, is itself an indication that Islam started off at least as Duo theism (God = Allah; Negative God = Satan) (Wagner 2008; Mahdi *et al.* 2021). On the other hand, and in due course of time, Christian clergy invented the Holy trinity and elevated several people to the Godly status, thereby making this religion polytheistic, at least in practice, in the present times. It may be noted that idol worship in the present-day Christianity is a reality (Crandall 2012; Anonymous 2021c).

The founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, could not define the God clearly. He was mostly concerned with enlightenment. Buddhism essentially is all about enlightening oneself (Helicon Publishing 2005; Anonymous 2021b). Therefore, in Buddhism, only the realms of God and Humans exist. This concept remains unchanged even today, making it difficult to identify/personify the God in this religion.

Other religions which could not clearly define or give a shape or form to the God are Islam, Bahai Faith and Sikhism (Wagner 2008; Anonymous 2009; 2021a; 2021j; Mahdi *et al.* 2021; The Bahai Faith 2021). In all these religions, while there is a clear acknowledgment of existence of God, the definition of God is bit hazy. They tend to use terms that only 'glorify' the existence of God. Bahais are clear in their thoughts about the accessibility of God. They plainly mention that the God is inaccessible for the present.

Adding more on Vedic religion (and thereby on Hinduism), Bauval and Hancock (1997) mention that the founders of Vedic religion (the Seven sages/*Saptarishi*) were perhaps from the Egyptian region. Using reconstructed astrological charts, they hypothesize that there was a great flood around the time when Vedic religion is believed to have evolved. Some papyri found in the pyramids of Egypt mention that seven sages migrated eastwards after the flood. However, this aspect of History is open for debate and needs more research.

Ancient religions like the Vedic, and Cult of Isis, clearly identified the God to be a female. Vedic religion also considers Fire as one form of God (Agni). So do Zoroastrians. Emergence of Hinduism, Judaism and Zoroastrianism was almost parallel involving the same geographical location. Hindus borrowed the scriptures and concepts from the Vedic religion, while the Zoroastrians borrowed the God (Agni/Fire God). Both the religions (Hinduism and Zoroastrianism) are unified by the fact their original scriptures were in Sanskrit. This is expected as both these religions moved eastwards from their place of origin. Judaism, on the other hand, had a totally different influence as it migrated westwards from the location of origin. Consequently, Judaic beliefs evolved into an entirely different sphere.

Whatever might be the case, two arguments arise from Tables 1, 3 and 4. Firstly, all religions agree that God is *omnipresent* and his/her abode is elsewhere and not on planet Earth. Herein again, none of the religions, save for Raélians, mention that God is an extra-terrestrial directly (Anonymous 2021d; 2021i). All the religions use subtle mentions like '*descended onto planet Earth*', or '*talked to so-and-so from heavens*', etc., without actually mentioning the location. All religions use the phrase '*Heavenly abode*' but do not give a graphic description of the abode plainly suggesting that it is impossible to join God in mortal form and come back to Earth to describe the same.

Eugene V. Gallagher (2014, 67-80) mentions that founders of two religions, Islam, and the Branch Davidians, a new religious movement (NRM), completed a 'journey' wherein they are believed to have ascended to the Paradise and have met the God. In Islam, this aspect is described as the 'Night Journey' (*al-Isrā*) or as *al-Miraj* ('the ascent'; Sura 17:1) by various scholars (Helicon Publishing 2005; Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor 2011, 59-74). However, this aspect of Islam is still under active debate. Nevertheless, the Hutchinson Dictionary of World Religions (2005) describes that the Prophet (peace be upon him (PBUH)) experienced the majesty of Allah (the Highest) and was also shown Hell. This account was developed into a full-blown ascension by the later day Islamic texts like the Hadith. Vernon Howell, the leader of Branch Davidians after Lois Roden, is also believed to have had a similar experience sometime in the year 1985 CE. After this particular experience, fellow adherents of Branch Davidians mention that Vernon Howell, who had limited formal education,

no longer needed the help of Bible to explain its meaning (Eugene V. Gallagher 2014:67-80).

Eugene V. Gallagher (2014, 67-80) compares these experiences of both the Prophet (PBUH) and Vernon Howell with that of ascension of "a man in Christ" wherein apostle Paul is said to have ascended to the third heaven and from there into the Paradise where "he heard things that are not to be told" (2 Corinthians 12). But in neither of these episodes, none of the trend-setters have clearly described how God or Allah (the highest) looks like.

Only in Hinduism and Christianity, do the Gods assume a true 'mortal form' to save humanity from excessive sins. Whereas there are hundreds of Gods in Hinduism, Christians consider Jesus of Nazareth as God in mortal form. Note that the Hindu calendar starts on the date Lord Krishna returned to his heavenly abode (Table 1) (Doggett 2012; S. Michael Houdmann 2021). The take home message from this part of the discussion is that God(s) and humans co-existed on planet Earth for some time before God(s) left the planet for mortals. Also, many religions acknowledge that if God assumes a mortal form to descend onto Earth, at one point of time, the mortal form should cease its existence. In simple terms, death is inevitable. Secondly, only the Bahai Faith clearly states that God is inaccessible (Anonymous 2021a; The Bahai Faith 2021). These arguments gain prominence for the simple reason that they are consistent with the present-day science. All biologists accept that death is inevitable to every living organism.

Physicists have defined 11 dimensions (or 12 if Zeroth is counted) (see Table 5). These dimensions are believed to be inexistence, at least for the present, at a sub-atomic level. To summarize the concepts of dimensions for the novices in simple terms, the dimensions begin with the Zeroth dimension wherein a point or a particle serves as an example. The point or particle exists but does not have height, weight, breadth, or length. The simplest example of existence of a particle in the zeroth dimension is the 'light'. 'Light' comprises of photons whose weight is negligible (Walker 2007; Goldhaber and Nieto 2010, 939-977). The first dimension is the length (a straight line serving as an example), while the second includes width (a square for example). The third being height. A cube stands as an example for existence in three dimensions.

**Table 5.** A listing of the 12 dimensions presently accepted by Physicists

Sl. No.	Dimension	Dimension Name	Symbol	Example(s)	Remarks
1	Zeroth	Point	•	No length, No width, No breadth, No weight = A Point/Photon	Perceivable by humans.
2	First	Length	$x$	A Line	
3	Second	Width	$y$	A Square	
4	Third	Height	$z$	A Cube or Sphere	
5	Fourth	(Space) Time	$t$	Date/Hour/Minute	
6	Fifth	Kaluza–Klein	$w_1$	Gravity, Electromagnetism. Time travel is possible.	Higher Dimensional Space. All these theories are commonly known as (independent) String Theories. Not perceivable by humans.
7	Sixth	Calabi-Yau space	$w_2$	Multiverses and Shape-shifting possible, but have the same beginning	
8	Seventh	String Theories (independent theories)	$w_3$	Infinite number of Universes with all the universes having different start points	
9	Eighth		$w_4$	Infinite number of universes that stretch to infinity	
10	Nineth		$w_5$	Multiple civilization/universes exist at the same time and at the same place without perceiving each other.	
11	Tenth		$w_6$	Persons living in this dimension have infinite control on space-time and have infinite powers exerting control on infinite universes, akin to God or Hawking’s SupInt	
12	Eleventh		Master (M) Theory	$w_7$	

**Note:** (1) Dimensions from Fifth to Eleventh are believed to exist at a sub-atomic level. (2) Each dimension, by default, includes the previous dimension(s). For example, the 11<sup>th</sup> dimension has one time dimension and ten other spatial coordinates.

**Footnotes:**

Current scientific belief is that the 11<sup>th</sup> dimension might be working at sizes around  $10^{-33}$  cm (Marais *et al.*, 2018:20180640; Ang 2020).

Beginning from the fourth dimension, which is Time, humans cannot control the succeeding dimensions. Also, starting from the fifth dimension, which includes gravity and electromagnetism, humans not only cannot control but also cannot perceive them. Only the first four (or five if Zeroth is included) are perceivable by humans. From the sixth dimension, we have multiple universes (henceforth multiverses) coming into picture. These multiverses have independent existence. In the sixth dimension, the multiverses have same point and time of origin. Again, from the seventh dimension, the multiverses have different start points. In the eighth dimension, the number of multiverses is infinite. The ninth dimension is unique in the sense that the multiverses exist at the same place and time without perceiving each other. The Hawking’s SupInt (or God) (SuptInt uses 6 bytes while God, a simpler term, uses 3) is believed to exist in the tenth dimension. Persons/Entities in the tenth dimension have immense power exerting their influence on infinite multiverses. In the eleventh dimension, it is believed that everything imaginable and unimaginable is possible. As we move from one dimension to the next higher one, we must include the previous lower dimension. For example, the eleventh dimension includes time and the remaining ten spatial coordinates (Argentum, 2008; Hawking and Mlodinow 2010; Vashishtha

2020). The point to be noted here is that a fraction of scientists does believe in the existence of God (or SuptInt) but may not be perceived by humans at present. In a nutshell, God, although is an extra-terrestrial, is *omnipresent* and perhaps not perceivable (read as *inaccessible*) for humans at present. This finding is consistent both with the religion and science.

### 3.2. The genders in religion

Almost all religions were founded by males (Tables 1, 3 and 4). Hence, it is but natural that the personification of God is mostly male. Consequently, all religions give a superior status to males. And hardly any differences were observed regarding other aspects except for the practice of Circumcision and in the prescription for life. Ascetism is prescribed by religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity for salvation.

The treatment of females in various religions was thoroughly dealt with by Crandall (2012). In the present study also, not many differences concerning the treatment meted to females was observed. While some religions do not have any Goddesses, genuinely polytheistic religions like Vedic, Cult of Isis, Hinduism, Jainism and Raëlians do have Goddesses as their divinity. But in all these religions, the original concept of Goddess was that of fertility and growth.

A noteworthy aspect about females arises in Hinduism, and Judaism (in its original form). In both these religions, women are by default considered more intelligent than males (Baldock 2012; Crandall 2012). In due course of time and owing to the nomadic nature of humans in ancient times, it was realized that women need protection (a concept concurred by almost all religions). This led to various religions conferring an inferior status to females and subsequently the second-class status to women leading to suppression and/or oppression. Hindus on the other hand, even today consider women to be more intelligent than males. Hence, the Kamasutra advises men to marry women who are younger to them in age by at least three years (Baldock 2012).

In Vedic religion, women were independent (both financially and sexually) and single parent status was acceptable to the then society. Women in Vedic religion also participated in religious discussions and had religious education on par with men (Crandall 2012). Note from Tables 1 and 3 that Vedic religion had three castes while Hinduism has four castes. As Vedic religion slowly transformed into Hinduism around 4000 BCE, Brahminical grip on the society increased and women were considered impure due to menstruation and childbirth. Also, the role of men by this time was clearly defined to be the 'donor' of 'seed' necessary for childbirth. Hence, around this time roles and duties regarding genders was more clearly defined. Women are now no longer as equal to men, and independent as in Vedic times. With the collapse of Indus Valley civilization and increase in the number of invasions on Hindu kingdoms by

either Greeks or Islamic rulers, women status became more restricted despite acknowledging the superior intelligence of females by Hindus. Thus, we see Hinduism in the present form wherein an inferior status exists for women.

Other religions also proffer similar reasons for according an inferior status to women. The prominent reasons being (1) Women need protection (owing to excessive wars among various civilizations starting from the times of Alexander the Great to the Colonization by Europeans); (2) Women are impure (owing to menstruation) and have childbirth (during which period they need both financial and mortal security), (3) Women are sexual beings; and (4) Women need the 'seed' from men to conceive and for childbirth. Only the Cult of Isis and Christianity believed in 'virgin births' wherein the role of men in procreation was deemed not necessary. At this stage it is worth mentioning that the concept of 'virgin birth' in Christianity arose because of an error in translation from Aramaic rather than borrowing of concepts from other religions. As per Crandall (2012) in her exhaustively researched 'Gender and Religion', the word 'girl' was erroneously translated as 'virgin' in Greek, and thereby hangs a tale. [There's a school of thought which believes that the Cult of Isis represents descendants of an Extra-terrestrial (ET) reptilian race. Many animals (vertebrates included) are capable of parthenogenesis (virgin births). A discussion in this direction is beyond the scope of this article. Also, details regarding ET reptilian race and virgin births form part of another on-going project by the same author. Hence those details will be made available later].

Special mention must be made about the status of women in Islam. Among the religions currently practised by the world population, Islam gives a share of the father's property as inheritance to women. Financially independent women in Islam are permitted to decide regarding their marriage or sexual alliances. This financial freedom is absent in the remaining 11 religions studied except for Vedic religion as per the original scriptures. All other religions give a share in property (at least in countries like India) to females only because of the present-day civil laws and not due to religious reasons. Regarding choosing of mates by women, all religions other than Islam leave the decision to the father of the bride or family heads or to the community elders. Even the Vedic religion for once fails in this aspect. Note that this decision taking capacity is given only to financially independent women in Islam.

During wars, the breadwinning capacity of the then males was limited, particularly for the members of losing side. Perhaps owing to this situation, women ended up being traded for their role as homemakers, or for their ability to serve men and manage their properties or for their capacity to bear children or simply as slaves. Consequently, women increasingly came to be called as 'property of men'. For these reasons and many more, male dominance came to be the order of the day.

### *Other similarities and differences*

In addition to the points discussed above, following observations were also made in the current study:

(1) Almost all religions have stratified the society on some basis or the other despite their claims that all humans are equal. Also, owing to differences of opinion, either due to egoistic nature of the then clergy or other reasons, every religion being practiced today (except for Raëlian, which is still in its infancy) have classes of at least the laity and the clergy.

(2) Except for Raëlians, all religions follow either solar or lunar or lunisolar calendar (Doggett 2012; Anonymous 2021i). *This means that since ancient times, humans achieved the capability to measure time.* Measurement of time (the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension) becomes essential for various reasons. It is worth mentioning at this stage that Jains claim that the 22<sup>nd</sup> tirthankara, Neminatha, to be a cousin of Lord Krishna of Hinduism (Long 2009). Most of the Hindu calendars start with return of Lord Krishna to his eternal heavenly abode (read as relinquishing the mortal form or death) which is marked as 18 February 3102 BCE in the Julian calendar (Drik panchang 2022). Neminatha is believed to have existed around 84,000 years before the 23<sup>rd</sup> tirthankara, Parshvanatha. Also, the Jain calendar starts on 7 October 527 BCE. Thus, the claims made at various sources of information on Jainism is debatable and needs further investigation (Doggett 2012; Anonymous 2014; 2021e; 2021f; 2021g; 2021h; Lou Hackett Silberman et al. 2021).

## **4. Conclusions**

In conclusion, from a spirituality point of view, all the religions profess the same concepts albeit differently depending on the language and geographic location where they evolved/survived. If the findings of Bauval and Hancock (1997) are considered, then, from a research point of view, a thorough investigation into the papyri mentioned in their book 'Keeper of Genesis' becomes mandatory. The seven sages/*Saptharishi* who migrated towards east from Egypt, as described by Bauval and Hancock (1997) are considered as the founders of the Vedic religion and by corollary the Hinduism in the present study. The reason for this is the concurrence of information at other sources who also described the seven sages as founder of Vedic, and thence the Hinduism (Crandall 2012). Around the same time as evolution of Hinduism, two more religions (Zoroastrianism and Judaism) also emerged. While the geographic location of emergence matches for all these three religions, their spread in different directions — Hinduism and Zoroastrianism eastwards and Judaism towards the west — determined their subsequent evolution. All

these three religions, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism (in its original form) gave some sort of a personification or description of God. Today, Physicists, although acknowledging the existence of a SupInt, do not exactly describe in what form does the SupInt exists. Maybe it must await appropriate experimentation. To summarize, God is *omnipresent* and perhaps not perceivable (read as *inaccessible*) for humans at present.

### List of Abbreviations used:

**BCE** — Before Common Era; **CE** — Common Era; **ET** — Extra-terrestrial; **GMO/F** — Genetically Modified Organisms/Foods; **HumInt** — Human Intelligence; **PBUH** — Peace be upon him; **SRP** — Spiritual/Religious/Philosophical; **SupInt** — Superior Intelligence; **USA** — United States of America; **WW2** — World War 2. Other abbreviations and symbols used carry their usual significance.

### Clarification

A dating controversy exists about the date of birth of Zarathustra (the founder of Zoroastrianism; Table 3). All the sources acknowledge that Zarathustra's birth year cannot be ascertained with certainty. Dhalla, Maneckji Nusservanji in his book 'History of Zoroastrianism' (London, UK: Joseph H Peterson/Oxford University Press, 1938, pp. 17), based on the marked closeness of the Gathas with Rig Veda, gives a very wide estimate for the birth year as between 6000 BCE and 600 BCE. On the other hand, Safra & Aguilar-Cauz (Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions. Singapore: Encyclopædia Britannica Inc, 2006, pp. 1164 - 1166), while accepting the fact that Zarathustra's birth date cannot be ascertained, specify it as 628 BCE without mentioning how they arrived at that date. Yet another source mentions the origins of Zoroastrianism to about 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE [Mark, Joshua J. "Zoroastrianism." World History Encyclopedia, December 12, 2019. <https://www.worldhistory.org/zoroastrianism/>]. Nevertheless, the present author goes with Dhalla, the high priest of Zoroastrians, and the Zarathustrian Assembly of California, which sets the start of Zarathustrian Religious Era as 1738 BCE (see Wikipedia.org's article Zoroastrian Calendar). Because the Gathas' grammatically match with Rig Veda, the approximate date of founding of Zoroastrianism is taken as 3500 BCE in the present article.

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