

# The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

## Why So Many Gods ?

**Question:** If the Vedic scriptures are actually monotheistic, then why do they recommend the worship of so many gods? Wouldn't it have been less confusing if the Vedic scriptures had taught the worship of only the one supreme God?



**Answer:** It might have been less confusing, but it would also have been less accommodating.

User-friendliness can be said to be a defining hallmark of the Vedic scriptures. The Vedic scriptures recognize that different people are of different natures and, according to their individual natures, they are attracted to corresponding objects and methods of worship. The *Gita* (7.20-23) describes how the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, mercifully facilitates people to worship various demigods according to their natures; it is he who infuses faith in the hearts of the demigod worshippers and it is he who bestows power to the demigods to fulfill the prayers of their worshippers. This proxy worship is meant to gradually elevate spiritually undeveloped people who by their natures would normally not be inclined to worship the Supreme Lord and would therefore have remained atheistic. But through the system of demigod worship, they are given the opportunity to worship a higher authority, even if it is not the highest authority, and thus make limited spiritual advancement. This advancement gradually purifies them and eventually makes them inclined to worship the Supreme Lord. In the *Gita* revelation, God is not "jealous" of his competitors, for he has no competitors. Rather, He is so compassionate that he is concerned not with maintaining his status as the exclusive object of worship, but with elevating people by offering them objects of worship that match their natures. Of course, God does want everyone to arrive at the highest understanding regarding the correct object of worship. Therefore the *Gita* (18.66) concludes with a call for undistracted devotion to the one Supreme Lord: "Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender to me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."



This analysis of the strategic, progressive revelation in the *Gita* offers a sample of the compassionate masterplan that underlies the apparent polytheism of the Vedic scriptures; their teachings are conclusively monotheistic, but not exclusively monotheistic. They do state that undiverted devotion to the Supreme Lord is the ultimate goal of all religious practice, but they do not make this undiverted devotion as the entry level qualification for passing through the doorway of religion. Thus, they allow far more people to enter the protecting, uplifting house of religion than do most other religions. Thus the Vedic system of multi-level worship bears testimony to:

1. A unique concern for the individuality of the worshipper and
2. An unparalleled flexibility of the worshipable in making himself accessible.

