

# Eka Aneka Vis-A-Vis Ṭawḥīd Al-Asmā' Al-Ḥusna: An Analysis Of Uthaya Sankar's View In His Malaiur Manikam

## *Eka Aneka Vis-A-Vis Ṭawḥīd Al-Asmā' Al-Ḥusna: Analisis daripada Pandangan Uthaya Sankar daripada Malaiur Manikam*

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**Abstract:** In the religion studies, al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā refers to the beautiful names of God, which such phrase is never ascribed to His creations, but only unto Him alone, as prescribed in the notion of tawḥīd. In Hinduism, the theological concept is addressed as eka aneka. Eka means one, while aneka means not one or many. Therefore, eka aneka means God in Hinduism is one but also aneka, which has many manifestations, incarnations, and different from the concept of tawḥīd in Islam. In 2015, Uthaya Sankar, a famous Hindu writer, claims that the Hindu concept of eka aneka is similar with the concept of al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā in Islam in his Malay language book titled Malaiur Manikam. Therefore, this research aims to study the intellectual background of Uthaya Sankar and his book Malaiur Manikam. Then this research intends to describe the concept of eka aneka as prescribed by Uthaya Sankar in his Malaiur Manikam and also to investigate Uthaya Sankar's view of equalizing the concept of eka aneka with the concept of al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā in Islam. This research applies the qualitative approach, namely content analysis method on the Malaiur Manikam text. As a result, this research found that the Hindu concept of eka aneka cannot be equalised with the concept of al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā in Islam. This is due to the fact that although Allah has 99 names, but Allah is one (tawḥīd) in His essence (dhāt), actions (af'āl) and names (asmā'), as well as does not incarnate into any forms or manifestations. On the contrary, even though the Hindu God is one, but it incarnates into various forms and manifestation. Thus, this finding can enlighten the Muslims and the non-Muslims on the concept of tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā vis-a-vis eka aneka, and also evaluate Uthaya Sankar's notion of equalising the Hindu concept of eka aneka with the concept of al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā in Islam.

**Keywords:** eka aneka, al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā, Tawḥīd, Uthaya Sankar, Malaiur Manikam.

**Abstrak:** Dalam pengajian agama, al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā merujuk kepada nama-nama Allah yang indah, tidak pernah merujuk kepada ciptaan-Nya, tetapi hanya kepada-Nya sahaja, sebagaimana ditentukan dalam gagasan tawḥīd. Dalam agama Hindu, konsep teologis dirujuk sebagai eka aneka. Eka berarti satu, sedangkan aneka bererti tidak satu atau banyak. Oleh itu, eka aneka berarti tuhan dalam agama Hindu adalah satu tetapi juga aneka, yang memiliki banyak manifestasi, inkarnasi, dan berbeza dengan konsep tawḥīd dalam Islam. Pada tahun 2015, Uthaya Sankar, seorang penulis Hindu terkenal, menyatakan bahawa konsep Hindu eka aneka mirip dengan konsep al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā dalam Islam dalam buku bahasa Melayunya yang berjudul Malaiur Manikam. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari latar belakang intelektual Uthaya Sankar dan bukunya Malaiur Manikam. Kemudian kajian ini bermaksud untuk menggambarkan konsep eka aneka sebagaimana dinyatakan oleh Uthaya Sankar dalam Malaiur Manikam-nya dan juga untuk menyelidik pandangan Uthaya Sankar yang menyamakan konsep eka aneka dengan konsep al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā dalam Islam. Kajian ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan metode analisis kandungan

terhadap teks *Malaiur Manikam*. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa konsep Hindu eka aneka tidak boleh disamakan dengan konsep *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* dalam Islam. Sebaliknya, sangat berbeza dengan Dewa Hindu adalah satu, tetapi itu mengindentarnasi ke dalam berbagai bentuk dan manifestasi. Dengan demikian, temuan ini dapat mencerahkan umat Islam dan non-Muslim tentang konsep *tawhīd al-Asmā' al-Husnā vis-à-vis eka aneka*, dan juga mengevaluasi gagasan Uthaya Sankar untuk menyamakan konsep Hindu eka aneka dengan konsep *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* dalam Islam.

**Kata kunci:** eka aneka, *al-Asmā' al-Husnā*, *Tawhīd*, Uthaya Sankar, *Malaiur Manikam*.

## Introduction

Islam believes that Allah SWT is the Most Omnipotent God; creates everything in this world. Islam is one of the monotheistic religions besides Christianity and Judaism. Monotheistic religion means that the Muslims worship or believe in the oneness of God. In the *Sūrah al-Ikhlās*, verses 1-4, it reads:

(١) اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ (٢) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٣) وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (٤) كُفُوا أَحَدٌ

Meaning: Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born. Nor is there to Him any equivalent." (Saheeh International Translation, 2010).

In Islam, God is one with *al-Asmā' al-Husnā*. Literally, *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* means the good names, beautiful names, or best names of God. In Islamic studies, *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* refers to the beautiful names of God, which such phrase is never ascribed to His creations, but only unto Him alone.

Whilst, Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of this world. The word Hindu is derived from the word *Sindhu*, which refers to the Hindus Valley. They are many controversies about Hindu god, whether this religion is theologically polytheistic, monotheistic, henotheistic or pantheistic. In Malaysia, a Hindu author named Uthaya Sankar makes his claim, which he equalizes the concept of *eka aneka* in Hinduism with *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* in Islam. Therefore, this study analyzes this issue based on Uthaya Sankar's descriptions in his *Malaiur Manikam*. This article describes the intellectual background of Uthaya Sankar, concept of *eka aneka* according to Uthaya Sankar's view, and analyses Uthaya Sankar's argument on equalizing of *eka aneka* in Hinduism with *Tawhīd al-Asmā' al-Husnā* in Islam.

## The Intellectual Background Of Uthaya Sankar And His Book *Malaiur Manikam*

Uthaya Sankar was born and grew up in Aulong Lama, Taiping, Perak Darul Ridzuan. Presently, he is staying in Shah Alam, Selangor. He is married in year 2000 and has a 16 years old daughter (Uthaya Sankar, 2018). Uthaya Sankar received his primary education from Convent Aulong National School. At secondary level, he got his education at Darul Ridwan High School, King Edward VII High School. Then, he furthered his study in Jabatan Pengajian Media at University of Malaya (1993-1998) and University of National Malaysia (1998-1999) (n.a. 25 November 2018). His talent in writing began to emerge after joining the Week of Teens Writers organized by Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka (DBP). Uthaya learns about the concept of *Tawhīd* in Islam from religious teachers in schools, religious people (*ustāz*) and from his readings (Uthaya Sankar, 2018).

Uthaya Sankar is a very talented Indian writer. He was also a well-experienced lecturer of Malay Language Course at many colleges, for example, International College of Music (ICOM), HELP Institute, Limkokwing Institute of Creative Technology (LICT), USJ Prime College, International College of MSC, Summit International College, Subang Jaya SEGI College and others. He has also worked as Television News Editor (Malaysian Language), TV News Distributor, Segment's Commentator of Akhbar Hari Ini, RTM Disaster Unit Operation Room supervisor at (RTM) Malaysia Radio Station and News Editor at Bernama Radio24. He was a recipient of *Anugerah Duta Keamanan* (Ambassador for Peace) of Universal Peace Federation on 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2008 for his contributions towards peace, understanding and solidarity through writings. He has also been a weekly columnist in Malaysian Insider since June 2009. On the

1st February 2010 he moved to Karangkrak Media Group as senior sub columnist. Subsequently, on the 1st of June 2010, he was appointed as chief of Meja Global. Starting 18th August 2010, he was appointed as Assistant National Editor and resigned at the end of February 2011 after aware of various setbacks. He has also been a weekly columnist in Free Malaysia Today since early January 2011. Beginning the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011, he served as Independent Professional and on 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2011, he set up Uthaya's Media, Motivation and Publication Consultancy, and was recognized as a certified trainer for *Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad* (PSMB\ HRDF) (Uthaya Sankar, 2018).

He coordinates the column of *Ulasan Buku* in both news portals as an effort of *Kavyan* to foster reading passion among public. He also writes on a website named *Projek Dialog*, since September 2012 about minority group and cross-cultural issues. Now, he is the Certified Trainer for Human Resource Development Berhad (HRDF) and founder of the Literary Group *Kavyan* (*Kavyan*). Uthaya Sankar SB is also the fighter of Bahasa Malaysia, as well as, the founder and President of the Literary Group *Kavyan* (*Kavyan*) since August 1999. Uthaya also works as the chair of the Association of *Pembangunan Kemahiran Insaniah* of Indian people since December 2016 (Uthaya Sankar, 2018).

Based on Uthaya's personal blog, the list of Uthaya's books is:

Title of Book	Year
1) <i>Orang Dimensi</i>	1994
2) <i>Nari! Nari!</i>	1995
3) <i>Siru Kambam</i>	1996
4) <i>Munis Dengan Harimau</i>	1996
5) <i>Hanuman: Potret Diri</i>	1996
6) <i>Yang Aneh-aneh</i>	1997
7) <i>Surat Dari Madras</i>	1999
8) <i>Nayagi</i>	1999
9) <i>Sasterawan Pulau Cinta</i>	2001
10) <i>Panchayat</i>	2002
11) <i>Rudra Avatara</i>	2008
12) <i>Kathakali</i>	2009
13) <i>Panchayat: Edisi Khas</i>	2012
14) <i>Kisah dari Siru Kambam</i>	2013
15) <i>Hanuman: Suara Hati</i>	2013
16) <i>Pulau Pendatang</i>	2015
17) <i>Nari! Nari!</i>	2015
18) <i>Malaiur Manikam</i>	2015
19) <i>Mandala Bicara</i>	2016

20) <i>Ikan Patin dan Beruang Besar</i>	2017
21) <i>Thirukkural dan Megha Duta</i>	2018

*Malaiur Manikam* is one of Uthaya Sankar's book that contains many topics. This book is divided into 25 chapters as it consists of 25 essays of many issues. The essays contain some issues which are rarely talked by the multiracial citizens in Malaysia. The preface of this book is written by A. Samad Said, one of the famous Malaysia National Laureate. This book was also republished several times by Dubook Press. This book contains 195 pages and printed by *Percetakan Mutalib Uthman* at Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor in Malaysia. Among the titles of the essays in *Malaiur Manikam* are *Lembu Dalam Budaya Hindu*, *Makna Sebenarnya Thaipusam*, *Cerita Kecil Tentang Agama Hindu*, *Ponggal Bukan Sekadar Pesta Menuai*, *Tentang Guru Agama Sikh*, *Berapa Tuhan Orang Hindu*, *330 Juta Tuhan Hindu*, *Jesus Dan Isa: Serupa Tapi Tak Sama?*, *Mengenali Ciri-Ciri Ajaran Buddha*, and *Kisah Tentang Melayu*.

### The Concept Of *Eka Aneka* As Prescribed By Uthaya Sankar

In describing the conceptual meaning of *eka*, Uthaya Sankar explains about this term in page 31, 68, 69, 71, 73 and 74. For example, in page 31, Uthaya explains the meaning of *eka* as follows:

“Muncul konsep *eka* atau apa yang kita sebut sebagai *esa* atau *tunggal*” (Uthaya Sankar, 2015: 31).

In the previous paragraph, it is clear that Uthaya Sankar begins his descriptions on the literal meaning of *eka*, which means one or single. Evidently, in the Sanskrit Language, *eka* means one.

Next, the term *aneka* has been mentioned in *Malaiur Manikam* in page 68 as follows:

“Istilah *Aneka* pula difahami dalam konteks Bahasa Malaysia sebagai pelbagai (dari Bahasa Tamil) atau bermacam-macam” (Uthaya Sankar, 2015: 68).

Based on that statement, term *aneka* connotes the various names of Hindu Gods and Goddesses such as Brahman, Vishnu, Shiva, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Durga, Agni, Indra, Surya, and others. Those gods and goddesses have various characteristics as well as their

own special functions or specialties. Among the Hindu deities and their specialties are:

The meanings of term *eka aneka* as prescribed by Uthaya Sankar are mentioned in pages 31, 68, 74 and 75 in *Malaiur Manikam*. As stated in page 72, *eka aneka* means:

“Muncul konsep *ekan anekan*- Tuhan yang *eka* tetapi dikenali dalam *aneka bentuk*” (Uthaya Sankar, 2015: 31).

According to Uthaya, God in Hinduism is one or *eka*, but they are also *aneka* or variety in shapes or images. For example, the Hindus believe in monotheism. It means, they believe in *Trimurti* God, which are Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva. Even their gods have various names or shapes (*aneka*), but their god is still one (*eka*). This theology of trinity divinity or *Trimurti* arises in The Medieval Period. In addition, the meaning of *eka aneka* also relates with the concept of *33 kodi Devar*. In *Malaiur Manikam*, Uthaya says that:

“Akhirnya, frasa 33 kodi Devar (330 juta Tuhan) digunakan untuk menunjukkan sifat infiniti (tidak terhingga, tidak boleh dikira) yang dimiliki oleh Tuhan. Frasa ini selaras dengan kedudukan ajaran Hindu sebagai agama Tauhid yang menekankan serta mempertahankan aspek Eka Aneka sejak lebih 5.000 tahun dahulu” (Uthaya Sankar, 2015:75).

Evidently, according to the book written by Karel Wayner. 2005. *A Popular Dictionary of Hinduism*, the term *eka* means one; *ekatva*: oneness; *tad ekam*” (Kerel Werner, 2015: 43). Moreover, in the book of *Introduction to Study of Hinduism* also stated that "*Ekam eva Advitiam*," means "there is but one Being; no second!" (Guru Prosad Sen, 1893:185).

“Brahman is limitless and non-dual awareness”, (Anantanand Rambachan, 2006: 61) which means He is only one (*eka*) and not two God. Limitless means Brahman is the God who has limitless power as he creates the universe and all things in this world.

### **Analysis Of Uthaya Sankar’s Arguments On Equalizing *Eka Aneka* With *Tawḥīd Al-Asmā’ Al-Ḥusnā***

In *Malaiur Manikam*, Uthaya Sankar views that the Hindu concept of *eka aneka* is same with the concept of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā* in Islam. Evidently, in *Malaiur Manikam*, he says that:

“*masyarakat pelbagai kaum dan agama di Malaysia*

*kemungkinan besar sudah biasa mendengar nama dewa-dewi seperti Brahman, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Laksmi, Krishna, Durga, Kali, Ganesha (Ganapathi), Murugan (Subramaniam) dan Narashima. Setiap dewa-dewi ada puluhan avatar dan inkarnasi. Kisah-kisah itu boleh dibaca dalam karya-karya purana dan epik India. Senarai nama-nama di atas mungkin membawa kita kembali kepada persoalan tentang jumlah Tuhan (Theivam, Iraivan, Kadavul) yang disembah orang Hindu. Untuk rekod, sebagaimana Asmaul Husna (99 nama yang teragung, termulia dan terindah) tetap merujuk kepada Allah yang Maha Esa dalam agama Islam, nama-nama yang saya senaraikan di atas juga merujuk kepada tuhan yang Maha Esa menurut ajaran Hindu”* (Uthaya Sankar, 2015: 72-73).

From the previous paragraph, it is clear that Uthaya assumes that the Hindu God has many names such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Laksmi, Krishna, Durga, Kali, Ganesha, Murugan, Indra, and others. But Hindu God is only one according to the Hindu teachings. It cannot be denied that some Hindus actually believe in the existence of thirty-three crore (330 million) God. In *Malaiur Manikam*, Uthaya explains about the concept of *33 kodi Devar* (330 million of Gods). Evidently:

“Ada pandangan yang mengatakan bahawa 33 kodi Devar membawa makna Tuhan boleh muncul dalam 33 rupa yang diinginkan oleh 33 “golongan manusia” (kodi berdasarkan sifat-sifat yang dimilikinya. “Devar” atau “Thevar” di sini merujuk kepada Tuhan dan bukannya gelaran bagi manusia” (Uthaya Sankar, 2015:74).

The above paragraph stated that Hindu God can incarnate or appears into 33 faces based on the God’s characters. The term *kodi* in Tamil language means ten million and that term can be referred to the class of Hindu people. There is also a view that views *33 kodi Devar* means God can arise in 33 faces that he wants in 33 type of human (*kodi*) according to the attributes that God has. *Devar* or *Thevar* here means God and not the title to human being (Uthaya Sankar. 2015:74).

Among the names of Hindu Gods are Brahma (God of Creator), Vishnu (God of Preserver), Shiva (God of Destroyer), Indra (God of Thunder), Surya (God of Sun), Agni (God of Fire), Rudra (God of Wind or Storm), Krishna (Avatar of Vishnu), and Mitra (Minor Sun God).

Name of Hindu Gods and Goddess	Specialties
<b>Indra</b>	God of Rain and Thunderstorm
<b>Agni</b>	God of Fire
<b>Mitra</b>	Minor Sun God
<b>Varuna</b>	God of Coverer
<b>Rudra</b>	God of Weather
<b>Annamurti</b>	God of Food
<b>Vishnu</b>	God of Preserver
<b>Shiva</b>	God of Destroyer
<b>Brahma</b>	God of Creator
<b>Ananta</b>	Snake God
<b>Laksmi</b>	Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity (Consort of Vishnu)
<b>Durga</b>	Goddess of Vengeful Warrior Goddess of Fertility, Prosperity and Bountiful Harvest
<b>Sarasvati</b>	Consort of Brahma
<b>Prithvi</b>	Goddess of Earth
<b>Ganga</b>	Goddess of Ganga River
<b>Parvati</b>	Goddess of Fertility
<b>Kali</b>	Goddess of Destruction (Consort of Shiva)

In *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism* by J.G. Lochtefeld states about the concept of incarnation (avatars). In “Hindu mythology, the descent (of a deity), but more colloquially the incarnation, of a deity on earth. The concept of avatars has been best developed by the devotees (bhakta) of the god Vishnu, who perceive him as taking a specific form to help the world” (James G. Lochtefeld. 2002: 72).

So, Hindu God incarnates in many specific forms and have variety of names and attributes. Then, in page 69 Uthaya Sankar continues to equate the concept of *eka aneka* with the concept of *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* through his claim as follows:

“sejumlah 99 nama itu tidak pula bermakna Allah hanya memiliki 99 sifat atau lebih parah jika ada pihak yang beranggapan bahawa terdapat 99 Tuhan selain daripada Allah dalam agama Islam. Atas sebab inilah juga saya amat menggalakkan dialog antara agama, supaya dapat merungkai apa-apa salah tanggapan yang mungkin wujud dalam kalangan masyarakat pelbagai agama. Antara nama yang digunakan berdasarkan sifat-sifat Allah ialah Al-Khāliq iaitu

Maha Pencipta, Al-Waliyy iaitu Maha Melindungi dan Al-Mumīt iaitu Maha Mematikan. Kalau diperhatikan dalam konteks agama Hindu di mana Bahasa Sanskrit digunakan, sifat Tuhan yang Maha Pencipta dirujuk sebagai Brahma, Maha Melindungi dirujuk sebagai Vishnu dan Maha Mematikan dirujuk sebagai Shiva” (Uthaya Sankar. 2015: 69).

Therefore, through the analysis on the concept of *eka aneka* and *tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Husnā*, this research found that the view of Uthaya Sankar on equalising the Hindu concept of *eka aneka* with the concept of *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* in Islam is not coherent. In reality, the concept of *al-Asmā' al-Husnā* in Islam is not same with *eka aneka* in Hinduism because the Hindu God incarnates or manifests into various forms and shapes. Evidently:

“Although there is some variation in the list of Vishnu’s avatars, the generally accepted list is as follows: Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Man-Lion, Vamana (dwarf), Parashuram, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and Kalki. This list of avatars follows an “evolutionary” sequence—the first three are animals, the fourth a hybrid man-animal, and the ones after that mythic heroes and sages; the exception is the Buddha, a real person who has been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon” (Lochtefeld, 2002: 73).

In this paragraph, it shows that Hindu Gods have many animal shapes such as tortoise, fish, and boar. In addition, the Hindu Gods can also incarnate into various forms such as Man-Lion, elephant headed man, and many more.

The concept of *eka aneka* differs from the concept of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Husnā* because Allah SWT is the only one single God. Allah is not two, three or more than that. The term of *Tawḥīd* is originated from term *‘wahḥada’*, which means combine something. This term also shows the oneness of thing. *Wahḥada* also means cannot be associated or equalized with anything. Therefore, the term of *tawḥīd* means the oneness of Allah, the Most Omnipotent, unbeatable and no one can be equalized with Allah (*Taḥzīb al-Lughah*, 5/192-198 and *Muʿjām Maqāyis al-Lughah*, 1084).

Then, *al-asmā' al-Husnā* means the beautiful names of Allah or the best names of Allah. All of the names are based on the attributes of Allah such as *al-ʿAlīm* (The Omniscient), *al-Kabīr* (The Greatest), *al-Muʿiz* (The Honourer or The Bestower), *al-Samīʿ* (The All-Hearing), *al-Baṣīr* (The All-Seeing), *al-Hakam* (The Judge, The Giver of Justice), *al-Gḥafūr* (The Forgiving), and others else. But, these names of Allah

are only name. They do not mean that Allah incarnates into many shapes based on his 99 names. Evidently, Allah SWT said in Sūrah al-Isrā’ 17:110:

قُلْ أَدْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُوهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا (١١٠)

Meaning: Say, "Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names." And do not recite [too] loudly in your prayer or [too] quietly but seek between that an [intermediate] way.

Based on this verse, it shows that Allah tells Muslims to call His name as Allāh or using *al-Rahmān* and both names are good to call. This is because Allāh has many honourable and good names such as *al-‘Alīm* (The Most Knower), *al-Rahīm* (The Most Merciful), *al-Basīt* (The Most Expander), *al-Hāfīz* (The Most Preserver or Guardian or Protector) and others else.

In addition, Allah also said in Sūrah al-‘Arāf 7:180:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

Meaning: “And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing.”

Based on the previous verse, it can be understood that Allah says all the ninety-nine best names are belong to Allah SWT. Other creations cannot share His names and His attributes. Thus, Muslims must use all of those names to invoke Him. Then, who misuse Allah’s names will get punishments from Him.

Thus, the concept of *Tawhīd al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā* means the essence of Allah is only one and Allah does not manifest or incarnate into any shapes and manifestations same as the Hindu Gods. Even though Allah has 99 beautiful names, all these names are referring to one essence or divine substance. Allah never manifests and nor will He be the same as his creatures in terms of attributes, essence or in actions. Evidently, in Sūrah Al-Isrā’ 17:111:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ وِليٌّ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَكَبِيرُهُ كَبِيرًا (١١١)

Meaning: And say, "Praise to Allah, who has not taken a son and has had no partner in [His] dominion and has no [need of a] protector out of weakness; and glorify

Him with [great] glorification."(111)

Based on the previous verse, it can be understood that Allah SWT has no son or partner. Allah also did not need something or someone to protect Him because Allah is the Most Omnipotent, Most Omniscient all of things that happen in this universe. Allah is also purified from any weaknesses and He is the Most Great Muslim scholars also give their commentaries about the meaning of *Tawhīd al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā* such as al-Ghazali, al-Qurṭubī and al-Sanusi in interpreting Sūrah al-‘Arāf 7:180:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

Meaning: And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing. (Al-Quran. al-‘Arāf 7:180)

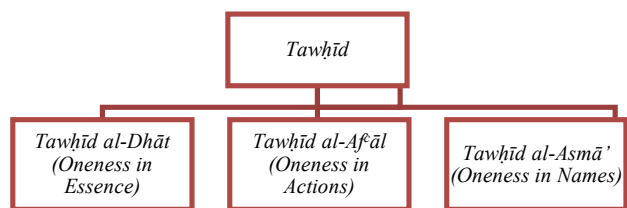


Figure 1: The Divisions of *Tawhīd al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā*

Al-Qurtubī’, one of the great Muslim scholars gives his commentary on that verse, by describing the three parts of *Tawhīd al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā*, namely Tawhīd in essence (*dhāt*), actions (*afāl*) and names (*asmā’*) (Al-Qurtubī, 2005: 36). This means that Allah SWT is unity in his essence, actions and names. Unity in his essence means that Allah does not incarnates in other body or other essence such as the Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism. Next, unity in His actions. This means that only Allah alone Who governs this world and universe. Allah also does not need any help from other beings. Lastly, unity in His names. Although Allāh has ninety-nine of Beautiful Names such as *Al-Mālik* (The Most Powerful King), *Al-Quddūs* (The Most Divine or Holy), *Al-Salām* (The Most Peace), *Al-Wahhāb* (The Most Bestower), *Al-‘Adhīm* (The Greatest), *Al-Jabbār* (The Most Almighty) and others else, Allah is only One God that must be worshipped and believed. Al-Sanūsi also gives his own commentaries about the verses of *al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā* which are in Sūrah al-‘Arāf 7:180, Sūrah al-Isrā’

17:110 and Sūrah Tāhā 20:8 as follows:

"فَأَتَيْتَ تَعَالَى لِنَفْسِهِ أَسْمَاءَ سَامِيَةٍ وَصِفَاتٍ مُّقَدَّسَةٍ عَالِيَةٍ."

Meaning: Allah has affirmed that He has the highest names and highest divine attributes (Abi ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad IbnYūsuf al-Sanūsī al-Ḥasanī, 1761:7).

This view means that even though Allah has many highest names, but his divine attributes cannot be shared to anyone else including other beings. This is because, Allah is *al-Khāliq*, the One who determines and creates thing according to proper measure and proportion of each thing. Allah is also the Creator, the One who plans and works effectively and perfectly. That is why the essence of Allah also one, which cannot be similarized with any creations and purified from new things and changes. The actions of Allah also cannot be equated with the actions of other beings.

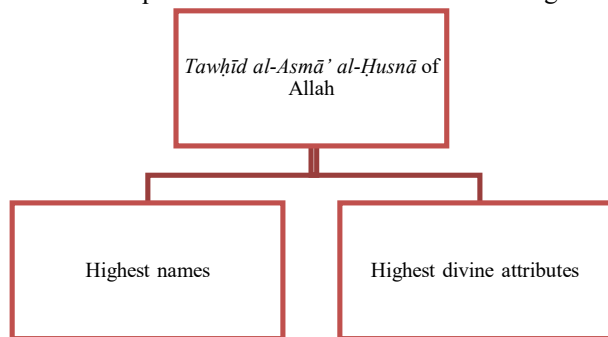


Figure 2: The Division of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* of Allah According to Al-Sanūsī

In his book titled *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā Fi Sharḥ Maʿānī al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*, Al-Ghazālī also gives his own commentaries on the verse 40 in Sūrah Yūsūf:

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءَ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَءَابَاؤُكُمْ مِمَّا أُنزِلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ لِلَّهِ اللَّهُ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الَّذِينَ الْفَقِيرُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٠)

Meaning: You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know. (Al-Qurʿān, Yūsūf, 12:40) He views on the verse *mā taʿbudūna min dūnihī illā asmāan sammaitumūhā antum wa ābāʿukum*. Which Allah says: 'Those whom you worship beside him are but names which are you have named, you and your fathers'. (12:40), though it is known that they did not worship words which were composed of letters, but rather the things named; we say whoever infers from

this (that named are the same things named) fails to understand its meaning, for He did not say that they worshipped the things named without the names" (Abī Ḥāmid Muḥammad Bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, 2003: 37).

This view by al-Ghazali shows that whoever worshipped the idols, they only worshipped that idol because of the names of their God. For example, the Hindus make the idol according to their God characteristics and names. But, in the Islamic perspective, the idols cannot do anything or help anyone. The idols also can be destroyed. If it can be destroyed, so these idols could not be regarded as Gods. God is eternal and do not die or cannot be destroyed. God is also omnipotent which is having unlimited power and able to do anything that He want to do. Therefore, all of these evidences show that Allah is only one God, although He has many names, which is *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* (99 beautiful names of Allah). Allah is not same with other creatures because Allah is the Most Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient. Allah said in Sūrah al-Shūrā 42: 11:

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ اَزْوَاجًا يَدْرُوكُمْ فِيهَا لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهٖ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (١١)

Meaning: [He is] Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby. There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing (11).

Based on the verse above, it can be proven that Allah SWT is the creator of everything that exists in this universe. Allah also cannot be equated with any creatures whether in His essence, names actions and attributes. Therefore, these evidences refute the equality between concept *eka aneka* in Hinduism with concept *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* in Islam as prescribed by Uthaya Sankar in his *Malaiur Manikam*.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *eka aneka* means Hindu God is one (*eka*), but has many (*aneka*) forms. The forms that they have are in term of faces, shapes and names. While, *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* means the best and beautiful names of Allah. In *Malaiur Manikam*, Uthaya Sankar views the concept of *eka aneka* in Hinduism equals with the concept of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* in Islam. But, through analysis of both concepts, it is found that the



concept of *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* in Islam is differs from the *eka aneka* concept in Hinduism. This is because the Hindu God incarnates or manifests into many shapes or forms. Therefore, the Hindu concept of *eka aneka* is not *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* because both concepts are not same and can never be equalized together in human faith. Allah SWT does not incarnate or manifest into any shapes or forms.

Although Allah SWT has many names (99 *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), the essence of Allah is only one as proven by Islamic scholars and Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm. Allah SWT is not same with His creatures because Allah is the Creator of everything in this universe. Lastly, every religion is unique. In order to understand every religion, one must refer to the authentic source and religious scholar who has expertise about their religion. Thus, one can get the right information about every religion.

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