

Unit 19

Hinduism

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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- provide a working definition of Hinduism;
- describe Hinduism and the Concept of religion;
- outline purusharth - the four ends of life; and
- explain the dharm-achar complex of Hinduism.

19.1 Introduction

What is called Hinduism today is not like a bolt from the blue. It has grown out of a long historical (including pre-historical) process. Rather, it has grown out of the dynamics of an ongoing configurational evolution. The drama of this evolution originated and unfolded itself on the soil of Bharat that is Hindustan and India - that India which throughout her history refrained from coinciding its political frontiers with its religious and/or cultural frontiers. In its ontology, both in Time (*Kal*) and Space (*Desh*), Hinduism has been having a remarkable resilience and continuity, though it has grown out of the acculturative give and take of diverse ethnic groups and races, and their language cultures and thought-processes. Or, to use D.N. Majumdar's phrase, it has grown out of the dynamics of 'clash of cultures and contacts of races,' and even religions leading to a striking synthesis in which Sanskrit language played a crucial role (Majumdar, D.N. 1965, Chatterji, S.K. 1965).

Nevertheless, the ontology of Hinduism has been being inspired by the *Upnishdic* exhortation of charaiveti (march on, march on) and the Gita's mystical but matter of fact worldview of avibhaktam *vibhakteshu* - unity in diversity. These principles emanate from and pervade *jagatyam jagat* (ever changing world); and, hence, they also pervade the metaphysical and the mundane, the world herein and the world hereafter - in short, they pervade man and his existential bases and dimensions.

Realization of *avibhaktam vibhakteshu* is the intrinsic trait of the highest and purest knowledge (*uttam* and *sattvik jnan*). For his ultimate welfare and happiness, man has to endeavour to cultivate it (Gita, chap. 18). So, in its ideological worldview about man and his existence, about Nature and Nurture in relation to man, Hinduism has tended to combine unity

with diversity, catholicism with eclecticism, orthodoxy with heterodoxy, world-negation with life's fulfillment, *yog* with *bhoga* and *loksangraha* with *aparigraha*.

A Way Of Life

In certain judicial pronouncements, Hinduism is characterized as 'a way of life'. There emerges a logical query - whose way of life? Is it of the so called Hindus or of the people of India who, according to a very early definition, fall within the definitional penumbra of the Hindu and Hinduism.

On the other hand, with regard to its contents, Hinduism is seen contained in its caste-structure and its mechanistic operation in ritual mobility. Caste structure, the real and the empirical, is wrongly equated with *varna*-order (the ideal). Hinduism, consequently, becomes a religion of a society, bound by its time and space. It is supposed to attain nationalistic overtones. Its existence beyond the Hindu, the caste and Bharat (that is India) is viewed to be a nebulous possibility (Bonquet, A.C. 1964).

19.2 Methodological Perspective

Having reference to the issues raised here, and also in the framework of these issues, the present essay presents an introductory description and analysis of Hinduism. This analytical description is presented from a sociological perspective. This perspective does not accept the dualism of Anthropology and Sociology. In India and also in South-East Asia, because of the social-structural phenomena prevailing here, Social Anthropology has created an 'intellectual space' in Sociology (Madan, T.N. 1985).

This presentation therefore cuts across Sociology and Anthropology. It is not biotic though it has elements of ethnography in its description. It is mostly historical-comparative. It is not through and through structural and/or functional. It, however, does not sidetrack structure though it lays a greater emphasis on 'meaning' in relation to ideology. For, even structure attains meaning in the light of ideology. Whether one believes in and worships *nirakar* (impersonal) or *sakar* (personal) or one believes in monotheistic or polytheistic theology or in both, or in atheism, it does not depend on structure but on ideology though structure does reflect in the Man-God-Relationship anywhere and everywhere.

Sociology overemphasizes empiricism and theory. Anthropology also follows that path. In the perspective on which Hinduism rests, there is continuum between the empirical and the philosophical and even the mystical just as there is continuum between *Lok/Desh* and *Shastra* in the ever moving backdrop of *jagat* and *kal*. Both in Sociology and Anthropology, we have tended to emphasize - rather over emphasize - the empirical (Lok / Desh). In the continuum of Hinduism *Lok* and *Shastra* borrow from and straighten each other (Misra, Vidyanibas ibid., 1995). So do the empirical and the philosophical.

19.3 Etiology and Definition of Hinduism

Hinduism is a compound and a hybrid term. It consists of Hindu + ism, with both the terms being of foreign origin. In English, 'ism' is a derogatory term when used in the context of 'any distinctive doctrine or practice'. If used as suffix to form a noun, it expresses especially a state or quality, or a system or principle or peculiarity in language.

Hinduism (as in barbarism and heroism) does not express a state or quality. It also does not express a peculiarity in language (as in Americanism). It sounds reasonable to suggest that those who might have

coined this term possibly used it in the sense of the system or the principles of life of the Hindus denoting their orientation to the traditional (in a way conservative) style of life and its ideological resource. However, derivatively, it may be surmised that Hinduism stands for the principles of the social system of Hindus as found in their traditions which combine a characteristic conservatism with dynamics, eclecticism and change and continuity.

It is in this sense that Hinduism stands not for 'a way of life' but for the way of life of Hindus. And, who is Hindu? In the context of this question, the meaning of the term Hindu as socio-linguistic usage and its dynamics attains a crucial place in an endeavour to define Hinduism. In the long span of India's social history, as socio-linguistic usage, the term Hindu has undergone changes but has had a thematic continuity. Linguistically, the term Hindu is said to be a corrupt form of Sindhu. It came into being when, linguistically, the 'S' of Sindhu (the river) changed into 'H' and Sindhu incarnated itself as Hindu and, later on, in English, as the Hindu or Hindus.

Box 19.1 The Term Hindu

As a linguistic usage, the term Hindu originated in the land sprawling to the West of the river Sindhu. It is said to have had Persian ancestry just as the term India is said to have had Greek ancestry. The river Sindhu, Indus in Greek, entered into the early definition of the Hindu and India.

Evidently, thus, the term Hindu originated with the geographical connotation, referring to those who inhabited the land lying to the East of Sindhu. With the advent of the followers of Islam in India (the Arab, the Turk, the Mughal and the Persian) this connotation received contrasting religious overtones in the dichotomy of the Hindu and the Musalman. This approach, in spite of its rejection, tended to continue.

With the consolidation of British colonialism and the advent of aggressive evangelical Christianity, many developments took place simultaneously. Both the Hindu and the Muslim recoiled in the grooves of their heritage and grew parallelly. Evidence of it may be traced in the writings of Raja Mohan Roy and Sir Saiyad Ahmad Khan and, later on, in the writings of Ravindra Nath Tagore and Allama Iqbal (Dinkar, Ram Dhari Singh *ibid.*).

During the medieval period, spanning over about one thousand years, there originated four processes having the undertones of religious experience but basically operating in the broad expanse of acculturation between the Hindu and the Musalman or to use the current phrase, between Hinduism and Islam. One process is evident in the Arabicization of Islam in India, linking Indian Muslims to Arabic traditions of Islam. This is not something peculiar to Islam. It is found as a process of acculturation almost in all organized and proselytizing supra-national religions owing existence in the religious experience of a historical person who is given the hallow of being a messenger of the *Alaukik*.

Simultaneously, in the medieval period flowed the powerful stream of *Bhakti Marg*, encompassing both the Hindu and the Muslim. Like the Ganga-Yamuna-*Sangam* at Allahabad, it is a confluence of two currents - *Sagun Bhakti* and *Nirgun Bhakti*. *Sagun Bhakti* is traditional, revivalistic and nativistic. It is evident in the Ramcharit Manas of Tulsi Das and Anandvan Bhuwan of Ram Das, Shivaji's Guru (Sarkar, Binoy Kumar *ibid.* 1937).

Both these outstanding personalities of medieval India take recourse to *Avtarvad*, with Tulsi Das presenting Ram as an *Avtar*. Ram takes *Avtar* to kill *Nishachar* (*Rakshas*, demon) and *Khal* (the deviants from the righteous path). As he accepts, he seeks to establish what has been propounded as righteous path by different Puranas and the traditions of *Agam* and *Nigam*.

It is often not taken into consideration that nearly all the propounders of *Bhakti* and the religious experience of *Advait*, *Dvait*, *Dvaitadvait* and *Vishistadvait* drew their mystically-philosophically oriented theological view of religious experience from *Prasthanatryi - Upanishad*, Gita and *Brahmasutra*. These classical works acquired cardinal strategy since Hinduism faced the problem of its theological distinction. And, this necessitates a relook at the prevalent view of a majority of historians that the *Bhakti* movement was inspired by Islam. Rather, it grew from within the cultural resource of Hinduism having strong touch of nativism and protest which is social as well as political. *Bhakti*, whether *nirgun* or *sagun*, is wrought and overflows with the ideology of avibhaktam *vibhakteshu*.

Sanskritization and Hinduism

In this context, let us refer back to the question already posed. This is about the kinship between Sanskritization and Hinduization. It need be noted that in the different conceptual shades of Sanskritization, the term 'Sanskrit', '*Sanskritik* (*Sanskritic*)' and '*Sanskritic* Storehouse' occupy crucial place. All these terms definitely refer to Sanskrit language and to literature in Sanskrit which normatively relates to various aspects of man's existence. The *Sanskritik* attains meaning only in the dichotomy of '*Sanskritik*' and '*non-Sanskritik*'.

Box 19.2 Aspects of the Sanskritik

To differentiate the '*Sanskritik*' from '*non-Sanskritik*' is treacherous. Is goat-sacrifice, as prevalent in the Mahasu temples among the polyandrous people of Western Himalaya, Sanskritik or non-Sanskritik ? In spite of being associated with the ritual of goat sacrifice, Mahasu is believed to be Maheshvar and a form of Narain. He is also Raghunath which is an epithet for Ram.

Mahasu, on the other hand, is derivable from word 'Su' meaning Devta in Kinnauri, with the latter falling in the Austric family of languages. The Kol and the Mundari belong to the Austric family and are linked to proto-Australoids (Chatterji, S.K. *ibid.*, 1965). Mahasu, thus, may be derived as 'Maha' (Sanskrit) + 'Su' (Austric). In this mixture of language cultures, the Sanskritik and non-Sanskritik mix as milk and water and not as water and oil. Similar is the case with the intermixture of flower-ritual which is Dravidian and the ritual of Havan which is Aryan. When the term Sanskrit is pivotal in the concept of Sanskritik why the other dimension of its meaning be neglected. As an adjective, the term 'Sanskrit' means what is perfect, refined, polished, cultivated, consecrated, hallowed, purified and excellent. It also connotes what has been purified and consecrated through purificatory rites (Apte, V.S. 1963). This meaning is the crux of the Sanskrit in Sanskritization. It refers to the nexus of rituals and also to the whole nexus of *varnashram* ideology of which *varn*-caste based rituals are a part.

In the Hindu Social thought, the dichotomy of the *Shashtra* and the *Lok* has been used since ages to understand the linkage between what is today being conceived as the Sanskritik and non-Sanskritik. India developed the categories of the *Lok* and the *Shashtra* to maintain and to explain unity in

diversity. This dichotomy seems to be more relevant than that of the Sanskritik and non-Sanskritik. As Vidyaniwas Misra (1995) points out, there is no either or relationship between the two. They enter into and borrow from each other to lend empirical meaning to and straighten each other.

With these brief notes, let us again refer to the propounders-expounders of Sanskritization and their exposition as far as goes the genetics of Sanskritization in its kin-relationship with Hinduism and Hinduisation. With Sarkar, Sanskritization is not a well-assessed and meticulously constructed methodological concept. It is at best a perspective on the onward march of Hindu positivism, contained in the dynamic continuity of *Smritiniti* tradition. In his work on *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, he uses this term Sanskritization in the context of the Sanskritization of Tamil culture, of Marathi language and Sanskritizing or Hinduizings of Persian texts. Apparently, Sarkar's usage of Sanskritization is essentially linguistic but, as a perspective, it gets loaded with wider implications when his usage of 'Sanskritizings or Hinduizings' is taken into consideration (Sarkar, Binoy Kumar 1937 *ibid.*, 372, 507-8, 511, 538).

M. N. Srinivas's Viewpoint

Srinivas seeks to present Sanskritization as an empirically valid and value-neutral concept though the phenomenon it seeks to delimit and comprehend is not value-neutral. To quote Srinivas (1966, 6), "Sanskritization is the process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and, frequently twice born caste. Generally, such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste-hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community."

In this process of mobility, the behaviour of the dominant caste of the region, nor the *varnashram* ideology, is the guiding star of the process of Sanskritization. The dominant caste is the caste which carries a lion's share in the social-economic-political resources of the region. The dominant caste of the region may come from any of the three castes, viz., the Brahman, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya.

Since, a dominant caste - for that matter any caste of any of the three levels - falls under the penumbra of a *varn*, operationally, Srinivasa's Sanskritization gets interlinked with *varn*-model of the dominant caste. Srinivas delineates the three *varn*-models - the Brahman, the *Kshatriya* and the *Vasihya*. Which of these *varn*-models operates where depends on the dominant caste of the region. Srinivasa's *varn*-model is thus derived from the dominant caste. In his scheme, the empirical possibility of the dominance of *Shudra* model is absent though it is also a reality. Both these stands are untenable ideologically as well as methodologically.

Action and Reflection 19.1

Talk to some knowledgeable Hindu practitioners about the definition of Hinduism. Note down the main points of your discussion in your notebook.

To Srinivas (1952, 65) being 'an enormously complex and amorphous phenomenon, Hinduism defies to lend itself to a definition. It, however, has a long history and a wide and complex vertical and horizontal spread. In the process of its growth it has developed certain characteristics. Its structural basis lies in the caste. As evident in the caste-based rites, rituals and beliefs, it is both Sanskritik and non-Sanskritik. The more one moves downward on the horizontal ladders of castes, the non-Sanskritik

becomes more conspicuous and profound at the levels of beliefs and practices, rites and rituals and even man-*devta* relationship.

Srinivas delineates three levels in the spatial-structural setting of Hinduism. The intellectual-philosophical level is represented by the Upanishad, the Gita and philosophical systems and commentaries on them. The level of the ordinary and the common consists of feasts, fasts, *vratas* (rites and austerity performed to achieve certain ends), pilgrimages, visits to nearby temple and sayings and songs of local saints.

Operationally, the third level of Hinduism relates to the process of its horizontal and vertical spread. In the horizontal spread of Hinduism Srinivas delineates four strata - All India Hinduism (which is chiefly Sanskritik), Peninsular Hinduism, Regional Hinduism (not clearly defined) and Local Hinduism. As Srinivasa's work indicates local Hinduism is village based.

Srinivas is aware of the diversity of the local but he does not emphasize and elaborate it. He seems to be more concerned with homogeneity that spreads through his constricted concept of Sanskritization than diversity and its amorphous networking through individual and society.

He emphasises on the absorption of diversity into Hinduism bespeaks of it. In the vertical and horizontal spread of Hinduism, Sanskritization plays a crucial role. He attributes All India spread of Hinduism to the extension of Sanskritik deities and ritual forms to outlying groups, greater Sanskritization of inside groups, easy absorption of local deities and the role of kings (political power) in the vertical and horizontal spread of Hinduism.

Generally, so far, sociologists have tended to neglect the role of power and acculturation in the origin, organization and spread of religion. This is so inspite of the fact that in the Indian ideology, in the relationship between man and *devta*, *devta* is *Raja* and *Raja* is *devta*. Ghurey's analysis of the role of elites in the conceptualization of God and/or gods could not catch the attention of the sociologists of incoming generations.

In our approach to understand the relationship between religion and society, we have been so much enamoured by the Western approach that we did not care - and, even today do not care - as to how in the past we have sought to explain our own structural setting based on *varn*-caste and the ideology of *avibhaktam vibhakteshu*. In this context we need to have a clearer understanding of what is Sanskritik.

19.4 Hinduism and the Concept of Religion

If Hinduism defies a definition, it also challenges the cardinal postulates of the concept of religion as it is prevalent in Sociology and Anthropology. To say that Hinduism is not religion does not however imply that Hinduism, as a way of life, is totally devoid of what sociologist conceives as 'religious experience'.

Sociologically, religious experience is intrinsic to social phenomenon called Religion. But religion, however, is not definable solely on the basis of this experience. Though subjective, experience in general tends to be related to something external, material and non-material. It may be internal as well. Religious experience relates to something which is unempirical and non-material, believed to be beyond this phenomenal world. That something is the Supernatural of the sociologist and the anthropologist. It is non-Human, super-human and all-pervasive transcendental Power. Like procreation and other institutionalized forms of behaviour related to man's needs, it is an intrinsic part of man's existential baggage. By his very

nature, in his existence, man combines the world herein and the world hereafter. The Superhuman belongs to the world hereafter.

Religion takes birth when this experience enters into and expresses itself in man's institutionalized behaviour, in his beliefs and practices related to the Supernatural - and, all this complex of phenomenon affects and shapes man's interpersonal, intra-group and inter-group relationships with a strong sense of identity as related to the concept and explanation to the conceived Supernatural.

Monotheism and Religion

Here, the monotheistic and monolithic concept of religion, intellectually set in the civilizational framework of Semetism, stood face to face with the polytheism of the multiplicity of gods coupled with the worship of ghosts, spirits, material objects, phenomena of Nature, with each phenomenon being governed by a god or gods and ancestor worship. Here gods and spirits were personal and anthropomorphized, as good as fellow human beings who, by possessing selected males and/or females, would talk face to face with the person in distress and difficulty or needing emotional security and serenity.

In the monotheistic concept of religion, the Supernatural Power, by concept, was the male. Beyond this, the Supernatural Power also manifested itself in the masculine and feminine genders and with innumerable varied forms. This interface of the savage and the civilized, the sophisticated and the bizarre turned the European thought to evolutionism as a methodology. It is evident in the evolution, diffusion, modernization and development - all these thrown up in quick succession one after the other.

It led to the search for the origins of religion and that led to many alternatives. These alternatives are the concept of soul, the ancestor/ghost worship (which seems to have been transferred from the Divinity of Ghost of the dominant religion of Europe), Animism, childlike psychology of the primitive and the early man and to fear and the need for emotional security coupled with the need for spiritual serenity.

Consequently, on the methodological-intellectual planes of Sociology and Anthropology, there surfaced, in bold relief, the dichotomy of animistic (polytheistic) and monotheistic religions, with the former being looked at as something bizarre and beyond the civilizational framework. In spite of apologetic methodology of functionalism - which overflows with sympathy and lacks empathy - it has tended to continue, somewhere surfacingly and somewhere clandestinely and in disguise.

Box 19.3 Aspects of Sampradaya

As the doctrine of *marg*, *panth* and *Samaj* gets rigid and averse to modification and change, it becomes a *sampradaya* with a touch of fundamentalism. It then invokes protest either doctrinally or through the form of the Supernatural the Sampradaya is associated with. The protest may be against the socio-political order of the day and, that, too, more through the doctrine and pronouncements of the Supernatural (Hardiman, David 1987). The dynamics of schismatic divisions and differentiations within the Bramha Samaj and Radha Swami *panths* bear witness to it (Bhatt, G.S., 1968, 1994).

It is opined that, as a methodology, the Church-sect typology, with certain adjustments, can be applied to modern religions which develop organizational structure. *Panths* and *Samajas* which grew in modern and medieval India can hardly be described as sects since Hinduism is

not Ecclesia. Hinduism has been having its own social organizational dynamics which solicits sociological enquiry.

Before closing this section let us again return to the concept of religious experience. Why this experience of the Supernatural? Is it for founding religion? It is well known that religions have been founded not by those who had the religious experience. Religions have been founded by those who followed the original preceptor and on the basis of his sayings and/or writings. Initial experience is not for founding a religion. It is ecstatic. It is *anand - sachidanand*.

It is the state of spiritual bliss where as Kabir feels one becomes *kanchan* (gold). As says Tulsidas, "*Soi Janahi jehi dehu Janaiyi / Janati tumahi tumahi hoi jayi* - only that one can realize you whom you make yourself known. After knowing you one becomes You". And, what is that ? That is One and That exists and in that existence, ultimately, neither that exists nor the One. It is the stage of nothingness to which *puja* takes the devotee. For, in the Flame of Light of That, the devotee and That mingle for a bliss of nothingness, *shunyata*. Is such an experience religious? How and in what way. It is at best a way among many ways. A true experience originates in the *Lok* but, ultimately, it becomes *Alaukik*. Religion cannot lift one to that level of experience leading to realization. It is essentially individual.

19.5 Purusharth: The four ends of Hinduism

In view of what has been presented so far, Hinduism is an ideology. This ideology is based on empirical realities of man's existence. Since, in these realities, the aims, needs and ultimate welfare of man occupies strategic place, this ideology besides being ideal, tends to be philosophical. It may be termed as ideological-philosophical. It encompasses both the empirical and the philosophical aspects of man's existence.

Dharm, therefore, becomes the highest and the most prestigious and highly sought for end of man's life. It, however, is not the only one, there being the other three, known as *Arth*, *Kam* and *Moksh*. Considering individual's organic and social evolution in society (enculturation and socialization), they are placed in a sequential order. In that sequence *Dharm* is placed first. Then, in order it is followed by *Arth*, *Kam* and *Moksh*. Despite this sequential order of hierarchy, in the totality of the order of *Dharm*, each one of these is equally important as, without each one of them, man's life in society would be incomplete and not conducive to the required happy fulfillment of life.

Action and Reflection 19.2

Read the section on Purusharth and then discuss it with a Hindu Priest. Is his view similar to yours or not? Write down your findings in your notebook.

As a conceptual term, in the Indian thought and literature, *Dharm* has had a long history. It has been used in various contexts and has varied linguistic usages. It is said that in the sense of Cosmic Order, it, in due course, replaced the Vedic concept of *Rit*. The latter stands for the laws determining the order of the Cosmos. There, it is a mystical force binding the universe to a natural order and man's social existence to a moral order.

In the Vedic usage, *Dharm* stands for custom, moral laws, general law, duty and what is right. In general, *Dharm* carries two connotations. In one, it stands for the laws of the natural order of a phenomenon. In

another, it stands for obligations which man owes to himself, towards others including man, animal and universe. An anecdote cited in *dharmik* discourses may illustrate it.

Arth is commonly used in the sense of *dhan* (wealth). It is also used in the sense of money. But, as *Dharm*, *Arth* becomes far more inclusive. It includes attainment of riches, property, worldly prosperity, advantage and profit. Broadly, it is used in the sense of riches. In a specific sense, *Arth* may be taken to stand for such 'tangible objects' as 'can be possessed, enjoyed and lost'. Man needs them to found and raise a family and for the fulfillment of life.

In Hinduism, poverty is not virtue. Poverty and hunger can drive a man to commit any sin. Man's virtues shine only in and with wealth. Without wealth even a good lineage does not bring status. Wealth is needed to follow *Dharm*. *Dharm* alone cannot be the source of happiness. Kautilya emphasizes importance of wealth in man's life and opposes widespread renunciation as it interferes with production.

Ordinarily, *Kam* is taken to be sex-drive and its satisfaction. As that, it is viewed as the lowest of *Purusarthas* though in the ideational ranking of the ends in man's life, it is placed at the third place. It comes before *Moksh* which is the highest end of life. It indicates that without the fulfillment of *Dharm*-regulated *Arth* and *Kam* attainment of the highest end remains an unachievable possibility.

As mere sex-drive and its satisfaction, *Kam* is lust, sensuous enjoyment. It is an obstruction to man's spiritual progress. As such, it is an enemy of man, others being anger, greed, temptation, conceit and jealousy. But, on the other hand, *Kam* is the basis of socially regulated mating (marriage). On it depends the propagation of species. Marriage is the door to *Grahasthashram* (the householder stage) which is viewed as the most crucial in man's social existence. This is the highly praised stage.

From the psychological perspective, Prabhu defines *Kam* a bit more inclusively. He includes all the desires in man for the enjoyment and satisfaction of the life of senses. *Kam*, therefore, refers to the native impulses, instincts and desires of man and his natural mental tendencies. It finds its equivalent in the use of such English terms as desires, needs, basic motives, urges or drives. In totality, *Kam* refers to the innate desires and drives of man (Prabhu, P.H. 1963, 80).

Gokhle B.G.. (1961, 82) opines that *Arth* is good source of fulfilling the desire and needs of *Kam*. For, good food and drink, pleasant and charming company, fine clothes, perfumes, ornaments and garlands are pre-eminent sources of *Kam*. However, looking at the importance of a woman as a wife in *Grahasthashram*, and, in a wider perspective, at the place of male-female in the expression of *Kam* and at the view in which *Kam* is the enemy of man, it is ordained that the good of man depends on a harmonious blending of *Dharm*, *Arth* and *Kam*. Mental and bodily happiness is the immediate object of *Kam*. Indulgence but with detachment is advocated as the medium path in the attainment of *Arth* and *Kam*. It is termed as *nivriyatmak pravritti*.

Moksh is the highest and most sought after *Purusarth*. Like *Dharm*, it is highly critical and most discussed. Literally, it means freedom. As commonly understood, it stands for freedom from *Sansar*, this world. It is based on the theory that this world is illusion. It is substanceless. The real is the *Parmatma*. Man's soul being a part (*ansh*) of *Parmatma* yearns to mingle and merge in *Parmatma* eternally.

In this view, the theory of rebirth and *karm* finds a strategic place. The soul is born again and again till it attains *Moksh*. It may be reborn in any of the eighty four lakh *yonis* (species) as per the *karm* of this and the previous birth. Its evolution in the hierarchy of *yonis* depends on the *karm* in this life coupled with those of the previous life. Birth in *Manushya Yoni* (human form) is the highest evolution of soul and an opportunity to attain *Moksh*. The choice lies with man. His success or failure depends on his *Karm*.

Ashram-Sanskar : Along with the four ends of life, goes the ideology of *Ashram* and *Sanskar*. Like the four *Purusharthas*, there are four *Ashramas*, the stages of man's life in society. They are rather four spans. Presuming man's life's span to be of one hundred years, man's life is divided into four spans, with each span consisting of twenty five years. It begins with the stage of *Bramhacharya*, leading to *Grahashthashram* and then to *Vanaprasth* and finally to *Sanyas* leading to final extinction.

The four *Purusharthas* are associated with these four stages. The first stage, the studentship (*Bramhacharya*), is for acquiring of knowledge of *Dharm*. The second, the *Grahashthashram*, goes with the pursuit of *Arth* and *Kam*. With *Vanaprasth* begins the gradual retirement leaving the reins of family in the hands of new generation. With *Sanyas* begins the complete renunciation. It is the stage of renunciation from family, village, caste and even from the life partner.

If the idea of complete renunciation has been held in Hinduism, it is in Hinduism that it has been challenged as well. Doubts have been raised if complete renunciation is a possibility in view of Gita's dictum that *Dehivan* (one with an organic form) cannot be *akarma* (that is devoid of *Karm*). Requirements of body, particularly of food, sleep and shelter, would not admit that. No *Sanyasi* could ever live away from *Math*, panthic Gurudwaras and Ashramas. They often moved and lived on the periphery of village - now they mostly live in the city.

Sanskars, described as rites de passage, are ordinarily said to be sixteen in number. Their linkage with the stages of life has been very well described by Prabhu and others (Prabhu, P.H. ibid 1963). All these *ashrams* are the part of man's life and its evolution. As proliferation of *ashrams* tends to indicate *Vanaprasth* and *Sanyas* have not become eclipsed. Rather, they have acquired new dimensions.

Here certain aspects of *Purusharthas* and *Ashramas* need be noted. In view of their inevitable linkage with life which can not exist without and away from society, *Sanyas*, as associated with the *Purusharth* of *Moksh*, assumes social significance in the scheme of life. Ordinarily, whole life is viewed as preparation for *Moksh*. The Ashram of *Sanyas* is viewed to be a specialized stage for the preparation of *Moksh*.

This is the stage in which through the institution of *Sanyas* man can become *Mumuksh*, i.e. one oriented to *Moksh*. Viewed differently, in this stage of life, man, infact, attains freedom. Nirmal Kumar Bose viewed *Sanyas* as the safety valve of caste society. On entering *Sanyas*, one rises above caste, its occupational and economic bondages, its distinctions, differentiations, disabilities and hierarchy. He becomes a free man provided he wills for it.

Raj Dharm : Since, in Hinduism, *Dharm* encompasses the whole of man's life in society, there also developed the concept of *Raj Dharm* i.e. the *Dharm* of *Raj*. The word *Raj* does not denote *Raja* but governance. This *Dharm* binds the ruler and the ruled in a righteous order for which *Raj Dharm* lays down the rules. In *Raj Dharm*, besides the rules of governance,

there developed the concept of *Raja Devta* with tutelary character and role. It was present during the medieval period and it was present during the British period as evident in the title of 'Company Bahadur' for East India Company and the song composed by Rabindra Nath Tagore which has been incorporated in India's National Anthem.

In this song, addressed to the British king, George V, the king is addressed as '*Jan gan man adhinayak*' - the ruler of the hearts of common man and he is hailed as that. This finds expression in '*Jaya*' of political leaders. Historians have amply brought out the ingredients of the *Raj Dharm* under the subject of the ruler, state and society (see Gokhle, B.G. 1961; Ghoshal, U.N. 1959; Majumdar, R.C. and Pusalkar (ed.) 1953, 54).

Uttam Purush : The concept of *Uttam Purush*, the highest of man, as an ideology has been present in Hinduism since its inception. It has been translated as Ideal Man. But Prof. Radha Kamal Mukherjee conceptualizes it as Ideal Person. To call it the Man Perfected (Gokhle, B.G. 1961) is against the ethos of Hinduism. For, perfect is *Ishvar* and not man howsoever divinity he may acquire or inherit. Emphasizing the spirit of the age, the *Uttam Purush* is the guiding star of his age. The *jnani* of the *Upanishad*, the *yogi* of *Yog Marg* and the *Sthitprajna Karm Yogi* of the Gita, the *Buddh* of the *Bauddhmat* and the *Kewalin* of the *Jain Mat* are some of the examples of ancient India.

The *Bhakt* is the *Uttam Purush* of medieval period. In the modern period, from the Arya Samaj arose the ideal personality of the Arya. The Arya stands for the sanskritik tradition and invites Indians to merge differences in Aryaism and become Arya. Gandhi's impact threw up the concept of *Satyagrahi* which with Vinoba Bhave grows into the concept of *Sarvodayi* who seeks development of all in the village-based traditional social structure which is an antidote to Westernization, commercialization and industrialism. *Sarvodayi* stands for *Aparigrahi* renunciation (Gokhle, B.G. 1961; Bhave, Vinoba, 1964).

19.6 Dharm-Achar-Complex in Hinduism

In Hinduism man's existence in society from birth to death is *lokyatra* (journey through this world). This is unavoidable. Without it neither fulfillment of life, nor *Lok Sangrah* (welfare of the people) is possible. Fulfillment of requirements and obligations of *Dharm* are not possible without *Karm*-based vigorous *lokyatra*.

Man's *Gun-Shram* flower through *Karm* and *Lokyatra*. Linkage of *Karm* to *Dharm* results in the linkage of the both with *achar* (righteous conduct). To follow *achar* is the primary basis of *dharm*. That, however, does not imply that *Dharm* is unidimensional. Linkage of *dharm-achar* (Dharmachar) links individual to *Shastra* and *Lok / Desh*. This linkage is present in *Kul*, *Varn*, *Jati*, village and *desh* - which, sociologically, form the structural basis of man's social existence.

There is the dichotomy of *Acharvan* (the followers of righteous conduct) and *Acharbhrasht* (apostate, the fallen one). The latter is deviant and personally disorganized; he has lost the meaning and relevance of life. As in any other system, Hinduism, too, does not approve of deviation. It rather, ideologically, allows for protest against tyrannical and injurious deviance threatening the very righteous existence of man. The *kathas* in epics support this view.

Achar is conduct, behaviour, manner of action or of conducting oneself. *Achar* is custom, usage and practice. It is also used in the sense of customary law. In essence, it is usual, customary and established practice

(Apte, V.S. 1963). *Achar*, thus, is usual but righteous practice. In the sense of usual practice, *achar* is also *lokvyapar* (usual behaviour, practised by people). Being righteous and usual, it is *Karniya Karm* (*karm* worth doing) unless of course it goes against the standards of righteousness as defined by the *Shastra*, *Lok* and *Kal*.

As *Karniya Karm*, *achar* seeks to promote the welfare of individual in society and a synthesis of *swarth* and *parmath*. Linked to *Dharm*, *achar* pervades almost all the aspects and departments of life. Even a *sanyasi* is not above the *achar* of the *dharm* of *Sanyasi*. Since, man exists and operates at many levels and dimensions of his existence, *achar* tends to be specific to the level of the situation. Each ashram and *Pursharth*, for example, is linked to a set of *achars*.

Kulachar, that is the *achar* of the *Kul* (lineage) encompasses marriage, family, *Kul* and extends upto kinship and caste. To cite an example, marriage with mother's brothers daughter in the plains of North India would be against the *achar* while, in the south and in the Fateh Parvat (in Uttaranchal), it is not a violation of *achar* relating to socially regulated mating. Again, marriage of a woman and her brother's daughter with the same person making them co-wives would not violate the local norms of marriage in Fateh Parvat (Bhatt, G.S., 1991).

After *Kul* and *gotra* come *varn-jati*. Though interlinked as the ideal and the real, they need be treated separately. However, in their explanations, sometimes, *gun* and *karm* are used. However, as linked to a *gun*, each *varn* has its innate disposition related to its prescribed *karm* in society. To follow prescribed *karm* becomes the *achar* of each *varn*. But, *achar* of a *varn* is most closely related to its rights, privileges and disabilities.

The linkage of *Varn*, ashram and *Purusharth* has crystallized in the *achar* of each *Purusharth* and its related ashram. In the form of do's and don'ts, an elaborate complex of *achars* are provided for the student, the householder and the *sanyasi*. The householder, in particular has to follow the *achar* of *kul*, *gotra*, *varn*-caste and of *lok* along with those prescribed by the *Shastra*.

The caste till recently and largely even now in the rural living - circumscribes the life of an individual. Culturally, it is rather a bundle of *achars*. They relate to endogamy and exogamy, rules of commensality, pollution and purity, consumption of food stuffs, socially inherited occupation and the way one is expected to conduct oneself in society. When in operation they carry a touch of the nuance of ritualism.

In the people's perception, at the level of *Lok*, they take the form of *Dharm-Karm* and are assiduously followed - once, in the scorching heat of the month of June, I travelled on bicycle from Lucknow to our village. On the way, I felt thirsty. On a wayside village, two villagers, cleanly dressed, were drawing water from a well by their *lota* (jug) and *dor* (thin rope). I requested them to help me with water. They said they were *chamar* by caste and felt hesitant. Being thirsty, I insisted. I reminded them that to quench the thirst of a person - and that, too, during summer - was a *punya karm*. The elder of them thought a while and then came forth, "we will not spoil our *dharm-karm*. You may do, if you like." They put their *lota-dor* on the pavement of the well and sat aside. They looked at me with wide eyes when I picked their *lota-dor*, drew water from the well and quench my thirst.

This happened about fifty years back. Such instances do occur in the country-side. But the *achars* of caste-behaviour are being modified and changed as well. Village studies, studies on caste and intercaste relations

and also in novels written on the rural life, graphically depict operation and change of the *achar* related to caste and religious ethnocentrism.

Achar relating to *karm* is multifarious and multidimensional. From the point of view of *achar*, *karm* has been classified variously but mostly in such dichotomies as *Karniya-Akarniya Karm*, *Sit-Asit Karm* and *Shukla* and *Krishn Karm*. Gita's threefold classification, the triad, of *Sattvik*, *Rajas* and *Ttamas karm* is most popular and finds mention in the literature of *varn-karm*. Whereas the dichotomous classifications are ethical, the threefold classification is rooted in the methodological concept of *gun*, its types and their play. However, this methodological concept is intrinsically related to the philosophy of *gun* which cannot be avoided in understanding the role of *gun* in the social existence of man (Prabhu, P.H. 1963).

19.7 Conclusion

We have described and explained and analysed important aspects of religion with a relatively eclectic framework of method. We then moved on to describing the etiology and definition of Hinduism. Our next endeavour related to our exposition concerned Hinduism and the concept of religion itself. We then moved on to describing purusharth - the four ends of life. We finally examined the dhar-achar complex in Hinduism. The unit has then touched upon some of the core issues of Hinduism and dealt with them adequately.

19.8 Further Reading

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