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 Research Management Cell (RMC)  
 Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Dhankuta  
 Tribhuvan University, Nepal

## Hinduism: A Perspective on the World and Life Education

Ganesh Prasad Khanal<sup>1</sup>

Email: [khanal.ganeshprsd@gmail.com](mailto:khanal.ganeshprsd@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*Once religion was ruling the world as science is doing today. The rule is possible through power and knowledge. This indicates that religious philosophy can also regarded as an important source of power and knowledge. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and so on as forms of religious faith have different philosophy become basis of knowledge. This paper, based on review of articles relevant on the theme, Hinduism, argues that Hinduism is an important perspective on knowledge which explains what world is and how it is operating. The ultimate goal of life is to get liberation which is possible through Hinduism. Hinduism has four basic paths that lead to union with God. These paths are for persons of different temperaments and natures. Some may prefer contemplation, some may be rational, some may be emotional and some may believe in action. Each path is called Yoga (Yoking of mind to God. These yoga are: (i) Raj-yoga, (ii) Jnana-yoga, (iii) Bhakti-yoga, (iv) Karma-yoga, through which human beings liberates himself/herself. Thus Hinduism is a perspective of knowledge which guides human beings understanding the nature of the world and the way through which liberation is possible.*

**Keywords** :Hinduism, religion, culture, belief

### Introduction

In many literatures religion is discussed in different ways. Let us begin the discussion on religion with what Tarte (2014) writes about the religious belief in Fiji. Tarte (2014) writes that the early missionaries converted Fijians from cannibalism and for many years the dominant religions were Methodist, Catholic, Church of England and Presbyterian. Then came the Seventh Day Adventists, Assemblies of

1. Mr. Khanal is an associate professor of EPM at Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Educational planning and management.

God and many others. The indentured Indians brought with them the religions of the subcontinent, Hinduism and Islam. During the 20th century, most of the world's other religions found their way to Fiji and won converts (Tarte, 2014).

While all these religious teachings have been of great benefit to the people, undoubtedly the churches' greatest contribution to the development of the nation has been the establishment of schools throughout the islands. They filled a void that could not have been met by any government. Devoted teachers came from many parts of the world to impart their knowledge, and many of the country's leaders openly admit that they owe their success to their church mentors and teachers. Many Catholic brothers, priests and nuns have been elevated to almost sainthood status by their former students. Methodist church leaders have been revered, and to be ordained is to gain a special place in Fijian society (Tarte, 2014).

While there has been little change in the influences and interpretation of Hinduism and Islam by its devotees, other religions have changed. With the waning of European influence, the Church of England and Presbyterian Church membership shrank before they adopted an evangelistic policy and brought Indians and Fijians into the fold. The Catholics and Methodists retained their strength and there was little racial or political bias. Many of the early Methodist Church Presidents came from Australia or New Zealand. Despite the fact that the Church was predominantly Fijian, there was a time when an Indian was appointed President of the Church. But the myth of a racially harmonious church exploded in 1987 when Methodist Church leaders blatantly sided with the Fijian Taukei movement and drew it into the maelstrom of politics. Many Fijians who abhorred the new direction left the church and joined other new denominations, such as the Assembly of God, Latter Day Saints and the Pentecostals (Tarte, 2014).

Turner (2011) highlights on the importance of religion and its differing nature according to the nature of regime. Two aspects of the modern liberal state can be considered basic conditions that influence the place of religion in modern society. The first is the problem of national identity in the face of cultural diversity. Most modern states are culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse. For most states, this diversity is a consequence of massive migration, either historically or more recently. With the globalization of the labor market, host societies have become more complex and diverse, and in addition they have become more difficult to govern. Singapore is an important Asian case where migration, before and after its independence, created a multicultural society; however, today it must deal with even more diversity. Like many other Asian societies, Singapore has a declining fertility rate despite all government attempts to correct that downward trend. As a result, the state must constantly seek

to import labor, especially talented labor. With its current population at just over four million and with little opportunity to recover more usable land, the state has decided to increase its population to just over six million. Unless there are very direct controls on the ethnic composition of migrants, economic openness inevitably results in greater ethnic diversity. At the same time, the state has an interest in protecting its own territorial sovereignty and in order to assert its sovereignty over society, it must create the political myth of a morally coherent and integrated society (Kamaludeen, Pereira and Turner, 2009 as cited in Turner, 20

Interestingly, secularization has also remained low on the agenda of the school of critical sociology that has emerged since the 1980s (Ram, 1995). Religion and secularization were seen as surrogates to other, more germane political concerns, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict and intra-Israeli ethnicity (Smootha, 1978). Concurrently, a new generation of political scientists, mostly sympathetic to the Zionist-religious outlook, sought to understand and restore the allegedly failed consociational order as the framework for managing the state-religion relationship (Cohen and Susser, 2000; Cohen and Rynhold, 2005). Only recently has the question of secularization as a sociopolitical phenomenon that was rendered obsolete, leaving religion as a powerful mechanism of social differentiation that undermines the concept of a secularized Israeli citizenship (Levy, 2011).

Barbalet, Possami, and Turner (2011) have highlighted on the social aspect of religion. They write that Émile Durkheim famously characterized religion in terms of a distinction he believed inherent in all religions, namely that between the sacred and the profane. The sacred, Durkheim held, was a symbolic form of the enduring and defining values of the society itself in which the religion in question resides. But the coherence of a more or less societally wide normative consensus that Durkheim assumes in making this claim is in fact not to be found in modern societies. This is largely because the populations of modern societies are not unitary in terms of their origins and historical memory, either through geographic mobility that accompanies modern occupational careers or through international migration, which has been a major demographic factor throughout the twentieth century and promises to continue in the present. Associated with these trends, the idea of the sacred – which requires a traditional understanding of received meaning supported by ritual practices – has given way if not to a scientific to at least a mundane utilitarian and therefore market set of values. These values coexist with quite a different idea of spirituality that does not compliment so much as displace the idea of the sacred which Durkheim found in the religions of settled and unified societies (Barbalet, Possami, and Turner, 2011).

## Objective

The principal objective of this article is to discuss the concept of Hinduism and to explore the characteristics of Hinduism. In specific this article aims to explore how the cultural practice of any society determine the human roles.

## Methods and Materials

This article is based on literature review methods. Different resources have been consulted as the secondary source of information.

## Results and discussion

Hinduism, in its own words, is a religion thoroughly permeated by difference. Even on the eve of V. D. Savarkar's coining of the term *Hindutva*—the specter of a unified and hegemonic Hindu nation underlying the Hindu nationalist movement—many of Hinduism's own spokesmen prided their religion for what they saw as an innate propensity for internal pluralism (Fisher, 2017).

And yet, whereas Balagangadhar "Lokamanya" Tilak, as we have seen, centers his definition of Hinduism explicitly on its "multiplicity of ways of worship / and lack of restriction on the divinity that one may worship," nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship advocated a different model of Hindu difference, one that threatened to fragment the ostensive original unity of India's golden age. It was this fractious and divisive form of Hinduism that Oxford's own Sir Monier Monier-Williams described, perhaps for the first time, as Hindu sectarianism—that is, the worship of Siva or Visnu as supreme deity (Fisher, 2017).

It would be interesting to start with what Griswold (1912) writes about the term Hinduism. Griswold (1912, pp. 163-64) he term "Hinduism" is taken as a general name to designate the form of religion dominant in India throughout the historical period, however much the general form may be broken up into particular sects. In this large sense of the term, Hinduism has been an enormous force in the world's history. India for the last three thousand years has been one of the most densely populated portions of the earth, and during most of the Christian centuries that form of Hinduism which proved historically fitted for export, namely, Buddhism, has powerfully influenced the whole Mongolian world. It is safe to say that during the last two thousand years, at least, Hinduism, as defined above, has influenced the life of nearly one- third of the human race.

Griswold (1912) further writes that in further elucidation of the religious significance of India in the world's history, it may be pointed out that there are on earth only two birthplaces or creative centers of the world's great religions, namely, Palestine-Arabia and India-Persia. And two races alone have been religiously

creative, the Semitic race, producing Hebraism, Christianity, and Muhammadanism, and the Aryan race, producing Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. These six highly organized and developed religions are all found in the Indian Empire, and their statistics according to the census of 1911 in round numbers are as follows (pp. 163-64):

### 1. Aryan religions

- a) Hinduism ..... 220,000,000+
- b) Buddhism ..... 20,00000+
- c) Parseeism ..... 100,000

### 2. Semitic religions

- a) Muhammadanism ..... 68,00000,00
- b) Christianity ..... 3,876,000
- c) Judaism ..... 21,000

Thus it will be seen at a glance that the Indian Empire is remarkable, not only as a birthplace of religions, meeting-place and arena of conflict for all the great world. For example, in most non-Christian countries opponent of Christianity is either Buddhism alone but in the Indian Empire Christianity is confronted Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, the three strongest religions (Griswold, 1912, p. 164). Thus all the religious beliefs including Hinduism can be regarded as the perspective towards world and life.

Let me further discuss about Hinduism from what Snell (1895) writes. Snell (1895) passes on the question whether or not it is an esoteric form of Hinduism, or a "pre-Vedic Brahmanism." Snell (1895, pp. 262) That it is not pre-Vedic seems evident from the fact that in the older portion of the Vedic literature, in the Rig Veda Mantra, for example, there is no trace either of the doctrine of reincarnation or of the law of karma. The Upanishads, however, as even their name shows, expressly claim to set forth the secret meaning of the Vedas. This is a very important fact in the present connection, for they were source of the orthodox Dar'sanas, or six philosophies, which Madame Blavatsky of that united body of wisdom of which doctrine, is the seventh.

But that the Upanishads do not represent appears from the fact that they themselves teachings, at least in many cases, to a non-namely, the Kshatriyas, or military and in more than one case a Brahman is from a Kshatriya philosophical doctrines known before. There is much evidence were the predecessors and instructors higher fields of thought, and there is that the Kshatriyas represent a non-Vedic the philosophy of the Upanishads cannot or a pre-Vedic origin. We are, of course, in the sense usual among Western scholars; when a Hindu speaks of the Vedas he invariably means the Upanishads-unless he happens to be very much Anglicized, or a member of the Arya Samaja (Snell, 1895, pp. 263).

It is only in certain particulars that the doctrines of the Upanishads or any of them correspond with those of the theosophists. It is true that the most important part of the philosophical side of Theosophy seems to have been derived from the Dar'sanas. The Brahman and maya of the Vedintins, the Purusha and Prakriti of the Sinkhya of Kbpila, the Yoga of the Sinkhya of Patanjali, and, under the name of karman, the Adrishta of the Vai'seshika, all find their place in this comprehensive creed. But still the philosophies do not furnish the theosophical cosmogony, or even with any definiteness the theosophical psychology; and it is a very noteworthy circumstance that Madame Blavatsky and her collaborators quote by preference from the later Puranas and Tantras, rather than from either the Vedas, the Upanishads, or the philosophical sutras and their commentaries. This much is certain, that Theosophy must be classified, not under the head of Buddhism but under that of Hinduism (Snell, 1895, pp. 263).

### **Fundamental Characteristics of Hinduism**

Hinduism as a perspective towards the world and life has some distinct features. These features reflect what Hinduism actually is. Griswold (1912) has discussed the characteristics of Hinduism in detail. As mentioned by Griswold (1912, pp. 165-70) the fundamental features of Hinduism are as follows:

1. ***Hinduism has always had the general animistic or pantheistic tendency to deify whatever is:*** This tendency may be illustrated from every period of its history. In the Rig-Veda, the earliest literary monument of Hinduism, divine honor is paid to heaven and earth, sun, wind, fire, dawn, rivers, mountains, trees, sacrificial implements, the cow, dead ancestors, etc., "gods many and lords many," any one of them being worshiped singly or all of them combined.
2. ***A second general characteristic of Hinduism is the tendency to syncretism:*** This also is abundantly illustrated in the Rig-Veda. As Hillebrandt well says, Vedic mythology is not a system, but a conglomerate, a kind of mythological "confusion of tongues," which arose through the coming together and fusion of the traditions of different clans (Vedische Mythologie, B. III, s. xii). In all probability each separate Vedic clan had originally its own tribal god, or at least had a simpler pantheon than that provided by the Rig-Veda collection in its final form. There is a good deal of evidence for the belief that the hymns to the "all-gods" as well as many hymns to dual gods are the work of mediatory theologians, Vermittlungstheologen, as Hillebrandt calls them.
3. ***A third characteristic of Hinduism is the contrast which accepts and justifies between "hieratic" and "popular" religion:*** This contrast already appears in the earliest or Vedic stratum Hindu religion. The Rig-Veda (including the Sdma and

Vedas which are largely extracts from the Rig) is on the hieratic or priestly. The Atharva-Veda, on the other hand, "demotic" and represents the magic practices, spells, incantations, etc., of popular religion. But notice that the

4. ***A fourth characteristic of Hinduism is the dominance of the religious point of view in all the affairs of life, or the supremacy of the religious consciousness:*** In Hinduism more fully perhaps than even in orthodox Judaism religion embraces the whole of life. One explanation of this is that the separation which has been made in the West between social custom and religion has never taken place in India. In the long course of the conversion of India to Hinduism each tribe and community brought, not only its religious practices, but also its social customs into the Hindu system and all alike received in sanction.
5. ***A fifth characteristic of Hinduism is great reverence for the ideal of renunciation and great capacity for sacrifice:*** There is no land on earth where there is such reverence for the religious mendicant and such readiness on the part of multitudes for a life of extreme hardship and even of self-inflicted torture as in India. But here too the reverence for the ideal of renunciation is too often an uncritical and indiscriminating reverence, which is responsible for the existence in India of no less than five and one-half millions of mendicants, vast numbers of whom are certainly not religious in any sense, and as a non-producing element in the population are a serious economic drag on the community.
6. ***A sixth and last characteristic of Hinduism to be mentioned is the existence in it of aspirations and anticipations still largely unfulfilled and unsatisfied:*** Such aspirations appear already in the Rig-Veda. Practically every one of the nine or ten hymns addressed to Varuna contains a confession of sin and a cry for pardon. Thus there is the clearly expressed aspiration for pardon and restored fellowship with Deity. But the consciousness of having found pardon and restored fellowship is not so clear. This may account for the fact that the penitential type of hymn practically ceased with the Varuna-hymns of the Rig-Veda. A vital experience of forgiveness was not rooted in the Indian religious consciousness.

Snell (1895) mentions about the manifestations of the god. According to him God has five manifestations: (1) the supreme glory of the highest heaven; (2) the creative, preservative and destructive power in the universe; (3) special incarnations, or descents for the salvation of his creatures; (4) the divine presence within the soul, and throughout the universe; and (5) the statues and symbols in temples and household shrines. Of the fifth, "the worshipable manifestation," it is said by the author quoted: "It is this manifestation wherein God, designing to hide his perfection and liberty, remains blessing those who slight him.

Snell (1895) mentions very clearly how Hinduism is a perspective or a way of knowledge. Snell (1895) writes:

Hindu writers enumerate several ways of salvation: *karma*, the way of works; *gyan-marga*, the edge; and *bhakti-marga*, the way of devotion say nothing of the *pushti-marga*, or way of pleasure which is attributed to the RudraSampradayisVallabha' carya.' The way of works was characteristic of the Brahmanic period, when the buoyant childlike spirit of the Vedic age had given way to the cumbersome ritual developed under the Brahman ascendancy. When the free philosophic spirit, under Kshatriya influence, rose superior to the pettinesses of rule and rite, there grew up in the period of the Darsanas the theory that the supreme blessedness of liking, dislike, or indifference (the Nyaya philosophy, the practical side of which was developed into Buddhism, by an elimination of all theistic implications), of the distinctness of the soul from matter, and its eternal existence and inactivity (the Sankhya philosophy), or of the identity of man and the universe with Brahman-the Universal attribute-less Being which nothing exists or can exist (the Vedanta philosophy). This is *the way of knowledge*. (p. 271)

Thus Hinduism is a perspective towards the world and life. It makes people understand what the world and life is and how human being should act to be liberation of life. There are also other new form of religion emerged in the world. In the context Gilmore (1919) writes an article on Tantrism: The Newest Hinduism. In this paper Gilmore (1919, p. 440) mentions that great religions pass through several stages of development until they reach what we may call crystallization in ritual. Frequently then there arises a revolt because of the excessive demand upon the worshiper's effort to maintain a right attitude toward deity. This may result either in the rise of a new religion, or in the revitalizing of the old by resort to the more spontaneous elements of worship, or in both. But in any of these cases there may develop anew the trend toward a fixed and burdensome ritual, possibly less irksome to the devotee, because of greater light on the character of the gods, but still with demands that come to be felt as excessive.

India furnishes the outstanding example of this course of development. Religious history there shows the hardening of Vedism into Brahmanic crystallization-a single ceremony might theoretically last a thousand years. In protest against this and in revolt came Buddhism and Jainism, followed after a millennium by the fusion of post-Buddhistic Brahmanism into "Hinduism" with all of caste regulation and once more an insupportable ritual. Finally there developed the revolt in what is known as *Tantrism*, which has as its avowed object the reduction of the effort required to reach what in the Hindu system is equivalent to our "salvation" by suiting that effort to



present human ability (Gilmore, 1919, p. 440). Thus Tantrism has become a newest Hinduism.

Gilmore (1919) writes that the Hindu conception which in the "apologetic" accounts for the *Tantras* posits a great subdivision of time (*mahayuga*),<sup>1</sup> which is again divided into four ages (*yuga*), each of which had its appropriate Scripture. The first was the golden age of righteousness, when men were long-lived, and physically, mentally, and morally sturdy. In the second age men's righteousness, longevity, stature, and entire strength decreased by a fourth or more. The third age witnessed a further declension of one-half or over, sin and virtue having become equal in force. The present or fourth age (that of *Kali-Kaliyuga*) is characterized by "viciousness, weakness, and the general decline of all that is good." Because of man's infirmity in this age, he is unable to sustain the continued continence and the austerities which in former ages gained for him what corresponds in the Hindu system to the highest heaven of Christian hopes and expectations. A new and easier way, though one not less infallible, must be provided for his salvation. Accordingly (so runs the apologetic), in the interval of one thousand years between the third and fourth ages the *Tantras* were revealed (Gilmore, 1919, p. 442).

### **The Hindu Sectarianism: Difference in Unity**

There are various sects in Hinduism. Fisher (2017) is one of the scholars who has worked on sects of Hinduism. Fisher (2017) writes that scholarship on Hinduism to this day has exponentially expanded our corpus of knowledge on the history of Vaisnavism and Saivism but, perhaps not unpredictably, has left Monier-Williams's definition virtually intact. Indeed, the word sectarian, in the vast majority of monographs, serves as a virtual stand-in for the conjunction of "Saivism and Vaisnavism." Our historical archive, however, tells a very different story: sectarianism, as it emerged in the late-medieval and early modern period, was not a fragmentation of original unity but a synthesis of originally discrete religions that gradually came to be situated under the umbrella of a unified Hindu religion in the early second millennium (Fisher, 2017). To be a Hindu, at the earliest moments of the religion's internal coherence, was by definition to be a "sectarian"—that is, to be a Saiva or Vaisnava adherent of a particular lineage and community. Indeed, at those very moments in history when the shadow of a unified Hinduism can be glimpsed in the writings of pioneering intellectuals, Hindu religious communities on the ground took great pains to signal their fundamental independence from one another (Fisher, 2017, p. 31). Take the following verse, for instance, extracted from a hymn of praise, inscribed in 1380 c.e. on the walls of the CennaKesava Temple, a Vaisnava center of worship in Belur, Karnataka:

The one whom Saivas worship as “Siva,” Vedāntins as “brahman,”

The Buddhists, skilled in the means of valid knowledge, as “Buddha,” the Logicians as “Creator,”

Those with a mind for the Jaina teachings as “Arhat,” Mimamsakas as “Ritual”–  
May he, ŚriKesava, always grant you the results you desire.

Although we may not know its exact circumstances of composition, this verse captures a pervasive motif of Hindu religious thought: one particular God, revered by a community of devotees, encapsulates in his–or her–very being the entire scope of divinity. Although in situ the inscription also served the purpose of praśasti, or “royal encomium,” of a local ruler by the name of Kesava, this verse circulated widely, accruing variants here and there, as a fixture of devotional liturgy across communities. Nevertheless, the standard of comparison (the visnupaksa of the slesa) of the pun sends an unambiguous message: in the eyes of his fourteenth-century Vaisnava worshippers, it was SriKesava who came to subsume the deities of competing traditions, both those that were generally understood as hetero-dox, or nastika–Buddhists and Jains–and those we would consider “Hindu,” or āstika–such as Śaivas or Vedāntins. Implicit in this verse is an argument not for irenic tolerance or universalist pantheism, nor for the essential unity of all Hindu traditions, but for, literally, the supremacy of Vaisnavism and of the god Visnu as the telos of all religious practice (Fisher, 2017, p. 32).

This phenomenon is of course not unique to Vaisnava theology. In fact, we find its mirror image in one of the most celebrated of Saiva hymns, which to this day remains a cornerstone of Saiva liturgy across the subcontinent, the Sivamahimnah Stotram.<sup>2</sup> In this case, the Sivamahimnah enshrines Siva himself as the ultimate goal, objectively speaking, of practitioners of all religious systems, irrespective of the personal sentiments of the devotees who follow those diverse paths. From the mouth of its ostensible author, Puspadanta, a gandharva seeking to regain favor with Siva, we hear the following (Fisher, 2017, p. 32):

The Vedas, Sankhya, Yoga, the Pasupata doctrine, and the Vaisnava:

Where authorities are divided, one says, “This is highest,” another, “That is beneficial,”

Due to such variegation of the tastes of men, who enjoy straight or crooked paths.

You alone are the destination, as the ocean is the destination of the waters.

Thus, Hinduism also has different sects. These sects follow different rites and rituals. However, there is unity in diversity in terms of sects and all sects have common goal as liberation of life.

## Conclusion

In fact, Hinduism is a broader philosophical perspective in which there are a number of underlying knowledge that guide the world and life. I would like to come to conclusion based on what Fisher (2017) writes about Hinduism and Pluralism. Fisher (2017, p. 194) concludes as, pluralism, in early modern south India, like religion itself, is an embodied, spatial practice; when religious identity is not the internal affair of a private, un-marked citizen, religious pluralism itself is performed in public space. The story of Hindu pluralism is no utopia; by no means is it free of inequities and injustices. And yet, attending to Hinduism's emic legacy of religious pluralism allows us to heed the advice, proffered by Martha Nussbaum among others,<sup>20</sup> to refrain from labeling any one vision as India's "real" or "authentic" image. When speaking of Hinduism—a religious unity that first emerged as inherently plural, a fusion of the myriad Saiva, Vaisnava, Sakta, and other religious identities—it is simply impossible to speak of an authentic Hinduism in the singular (Fisher, 2017, p. 194). Pluralizing Hinduism, then, is not a strategic project, designed to render audible its numerous subaltern voices—although this is undoubtedly a legitimate concern—but rather a recognition that its composite history makes it impossible to select any doctrine, practice, or identity as a Hindu "ideal type." Indeed, it is the spatial enactment of religious pluralism that formed the foundation of early modern south India's multiple religious publics, making possible a multicentric negotiation of power, identity, and truth. In essence, the sectarian religious publics of early modern south India provide us with an opportunity to rethink the very criteria for a non-Western pluralism, founded not on the prescriptive model of a Western civil society but on a historically descriptive account of the role of religion in public space (Fisher, 2017, p. 194). Thus, Hinduism is an important perspective of the world and life on the basis of which the human beings can liberate themselves.

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