

**INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD:
PERSPECTIVES FROM HINDI
LITERATURE**

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AUM

Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara

Speak the truth. Follow the path of religion.

DEDICATED TO

THE SUPREME LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

pitaham asya jagato mata dhata pitamahah.
(Bhagavad-Gita 9.17)

I am the father of this universe, the mother, the support and grandsire.

To my beloved children: Vyasna and Adhikesh
May you grow from strength to strength on the path of righteousness.

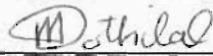
Om asato ma sad gamaya,
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya,
Mrityorma ' mritam gamaya'

O supreme Sprit! Lead us from untruth to truth.
Lead us from darkness to light.
Lead us from death to immortality.

DECLARATION

In accordance with the regulations of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of original and independent research. It has not been previously submitted for any degree at any other university. All sources have been duly acknowledged.

CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE



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(i)

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(ii)

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Acknowledgements	i
List of Graphical Representations	vii
List of Tables	viii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Subject of study: Integral development of the child: Perspective from Hindi Literature.	1
1.2	Aims of study	3
1.3	Problems	4
1.4	Rationale for the study	5
1.5	Literature Review	6
1.6	Research Methodology	8
1.6.1	Empirical approach	8
1.6.2	Triangulation	9
1.6.3	Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Approach	10
1.6.4	Quantitative approach	10
1.6.5	Qualitative approach	11
1.7	Ethnomethodological approach	12
1.8	Questionnaire Design	15
1.9	General Information	15
1.10	Single/double parents	15
1.10.1	Ashrama	16
1.10.2	Caste system (varna)	16
1.10.3	Ritual, fasts and festivals	16
1.10.4	Satsang	17
1.11.	Practising Hindu priest	17
1.11.1	The relevance of samskaras — priests' view	18
1.11.2	Ashrama	18
1.11.3	Scriptures	18
1.12	General	18
1.13	The sample	19
1.14	The domain for collection	20
1.15	Questionnaire distribution and administration	20

CHAPTER TWO: SAMSKARAS, PURUSHARTHAS AND VARNASHRAMA DHARMA

2.1	What is Samskara	22
2.2	Purpose and significance of samskaras	23
2.2.1	Eradicate evil and summon blessing	23
2.2.2	A purifying feature	24
2.2.3	Expression of joy and sorrow	24
2.2.4	Liberation (Moksha)	24
2.2.5	Development of personality	25
2.2.6	Uniformity in culture	25
2.2.7	Samskaras are like signboards	26
2.2.8	Samskaras grouped into four categories	27
	Pre-Natal Samskaras	27
	A(i) Garbhadhana samskara (conception)	30
	A(ii) Pumsavana samskara (conception of male child)	31
	A(iii) Simantonayana samskara (hair-parting)	32
	B. Childhood Samskaras	33
	B(i) Jatakarma samskara (birth ceremony)	33
	B(ii) Namakarana samskara (naming ceremony)	34
	B(iii) Nishkramana samskara (first outing)	36
	B(iv) Annaprasana samskara (first feeding)	36
	B(v) Mundana samskara or Chudakarma samskara — (ceremony of cutting the hair or tonsure ceremony)	37
	B(vi) Karnavedha samskara (earlobe piercing)	38
	C. Educational Samskaras	38
	C(i) Upanayana samskara (initiation ceremony)	40
	C(ii) Vedarambha	41
2.3	Ashramas	42
2.3.1	Brahmacharya ashrama	42
2.3.2	Grihastha	43
2.3.2.1	Eight forms of marriage	45
2.3.2.2	Mahayajnas (Duties in the grihastha ashram)	47
2.3.3	Vanaprastha Ashrama	49
2.3.3	Sannyasa Ashrama	51
2.4	Antyesti	54

**CHAPTER THREE: BIOGRAPHIES OF PERSONALITIES
ELUCIDATING THE SAMSKARAS, PURUSHARTHAS AND
ASHRAMAS**

3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	Mirabai	57
3.3	Goswami Tulsidas	60
3.4	Sri Sarada devi	65
3.5	Prahlada	71

**CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE, AND
INTERVIEW RESPONSES ON SAMSKARAS, ASHRAMAS AND
PURUSHARTHAS**

4.1	Introduction	79
4.2	Biographical Information	80
4.2.1	Religious Affiliation	80
4.2.2	Frequency by religious organization or movements	81
4.2.3	Religious scriptures read/ and frequency	82
4.2.4	Frequency of reading religious scriptures	83
4.2.5	Perceptions of “Samskaras”	85
4.2.6	Need for revival of “Samskaras”	86
4.2.7	Theme: Knowledge of samskaras	87
4.2.8	Perceptions about caste	88
4.2.9	Understanding the ashrama system	89
4.2.10	Reasons for choosing the ashrama system	90
4.2.11	Varnashrama Dharma	91
4.2.12	The four Ashrams	95
4.2.13	Theme: Marriage	96
4.2.13.1	Attending workshops to understand the principles of Grihasthashrama and the responsibilities that go with it	97
4.2.13.2	Marriage seemed to be plagued with adultery and domestic violence. What advice can married couples be given to avoid these emotional traumas?	98
4.2.13.3	What impact does parents’ behaviour have on children?	99
4.14	Theme: Child and spirituality	101
4.14.1	Hindu rituals, fast and festivals- observed by family	101
4.14.2	Religious observances enjoyed by children	102
4.14.3	Prayer	103
4.14.4	Many aspects of God introduced to a child	104
4.14.5	Encourage children to engage in daily prayer	105
4.14.6	Should a sacred shrine be created in homes	106
4.14.7	The views of respondents whether children should be taught the significance of religious symbols used in rituals and festivals	107

4.14.8	Satsang	108
4.14.8.1	Suitability to attend satsang	109
4.14.8.2	When asked about resistance to satsang, it was found that:	111
4.14.8.3	A significant difference of behavioural patterns among children who attend satsang to those that do not	112
4.14.8.4	Reasons for attending satsang	113
4.14.8.5	Scriptural knowledge disseminated at satsang	114
4.15	Theme: Holistic development of the child	114
4.15.1	Activities for the holistic development of the child	114
4.15.2	How can we create a balanced life for the upliftment of the child?	115
4.16	Theme: Parenting and religion	118
4.16.1	Fundamental guidelines that Hinduism offers to parents in rearing children	118
4.16.2	Modern parents' responsibilities	119
4.16.3	Role models	122
4.16.4	Relevance of scriptures to develop the child holistically	123
4.16.5	Adaptations of scriptural teachings in modern times	125
4.16.6	Hindu scriptures plan of action to eliminate family problems	126
4.16.7	Purusharthas	126
4.16.8	Artha and Kama	128
4.17	Theme: Health and lifestyle	130
4.17.1	How does the child's diet have an impact on the child?	131
4.17.2	Yoga	132
4.17.2.1	Will doing yoga asanas impact physical development of the child? If so, explain	132
4.18	Practising priest	134
4.18.1	Samskaras performed by priest	134
4.18.2	Importance and revival of samskaras	135
4.18.3	Influences of the samskaras on values	136
4.18.4	Dissemination of knowledge by practising priests on samskaras, varnashrama dharma, purusharthas	137

(vii)

4.18.5	Do you feel that before performing the marriage ceremony ,the importance of procreating and principles guiding the ceremony should be explained to the couple	138
4.18.6	Counselling in the Grihasthashram	139
4.19	Single parent	140
4.19.1	Has divorce/separation, death had an impact on the child	140
4.19.2	Teachings from Hinduism that help single parents	142
4.19.3	Single parents and the holistic development of the child	143
4.19.4	Do you feel that if you and your partner were well equipped with knowledge the divorce could have been avoided?	144
4.19.5	Reasons for divorce	145

Chapter 5: RECOMMENDATIONS / CONCLUSIONS

5.1	Introduction	148
5.2	Role of parents	153
5.3	Marriage	155
5.4	Single parents	155
5.5	Good company	156
5.6	Television	157
5.7	Yoga / Healthy eating habits	158
5.8	Prayer	159
5.9	Response from Angajan : Child Development	160
5.9.1	Response from Madhavan : Child Development	162
5.9.2	Points from Deepak Chopra's book on child development	164
	Conclusion	167
	APPENDIX A	170
	APPENDIX B	184
	APPENDIX C	187
	REFERENCES	188

List of Graphical Representations

Graph A: “Perceptions of “samskaras”	85
Graph B: Need for revival of “samskaras”	86
Graph C: Reasons for choosing the ashrama system	90
Graph D: Suitability to attend satsang	109
Graph E: Reasons for attending satsang	113
Graph F: Activities for the holistic development of the child	114

List of Tables

Table 1: Comparison of the Quantitative and Qualitative approaches	10
Table 2: Events attended by researcher to enhance study	14
Table 3: Ashrama samakaras and purusharthas	39
Table 4: Religious Affiliation	80
Table 5: Frequency by religious organization or movements	81
Table 6: Religious scriptures read / and frequency	82
Table 7: Frequency of reading religious scriptures	83
Table 8: Perceptions about caste	88
Table 9: Understanding the ashrama system	89
Table 10: Hindu rituals, fast and festivals — observed by family	101
Table 11: Religious observances enjoyed by children	102
Table 12: Samskaras performed by practising priest	134

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUBJECT OF STUDY: INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD: PERSPECTIVES FROM HINDI LITERATURE

“Children are beautiful, simple, energetic and intelligent. Children are humanity’s greatest gift. They have a rare beauty, innocence, simplicity and charm” (Swami Ranganathananda: 1988: 1). “Children are invaluable assets to the community, for on them is dependent the future development and growth of society” (Vedalankar: 1985: 115). Shaping the child’s future is an important duty of parents. Burns (2003: 16) states: “Your job as a parent is a calling from God. It is more important than your vocation, bank account, education or even your own happiness.” As a parent, it is imperative to understand that children have to develop their physical, intellectual and spiritual potentialities.

The yoga system was specially developed for the integration of these three aspects of development. According to Ranganathananda (1988: 9-10) “A healthy baby is the key to success for all other possibilities of personality development. The second level of growth is mental. At birth the child is totally helpless, but soon acquires knowledge in different areas and becomes self-reliant and self-dependent.”

These two dimensions of a child’s development, he states, have been the focus of attention in the modern world. However, of profound importance and often neglected is the next dimension, which is spiritual growth. Spirituality is the inner soft-ware of the individual. When an individual is instilled with spiritual values, then she / he is enabled to meet the challenges of life and find insightful solutions.

Chopra (1988: 21) states: “The seeds of God are inside us. When we make the journey of spirit, we water these divine seeds. The good life merely reflects our inner intention. In time, the flowers of God bloom within and around us and we begin to witness and know the miracle of the divine wherever we go.”

It is therefore essential that parents attempt to understand the relevance of Hindu scriptures to the art of living. Hindu scriptures have developed samskaras (purificatory rites), purusharthas (aims of life) and the varnashrama dharma (a harmonious, progressive development within the four classes and four stages) to ensure growth and development as a continuous process.

Unfortunately, the educational system falls lamentably short in equipping individuals with parenting skills. The Child Welfare Organizations are inundated with child abuse cases. Children need to be protected from sexual exploitation, drug abuse, violence and other criminal activities. An article in ‘The Express’ (21-03-06: 2) entitled “Child Torn Between Feuding Families Beaten to a Pulp” states that a grade two pupil at Lotus Primary School in Chatsworth died of internal bleeding after being viciously assaulted with a belt and then locked in a toilet. Hours after the girl’s death, police arrested both parents.” This kind of inhuman and outrageous behaviour can only be attributed to a total lack of human values.

The Bhagavad Gita As It Is (1.42) states: “By the evil deeds of those who destroy the family tradition and thus give rise to unwanted children, all kinds of community projects and family welfare activities are devastated.” Swami Prabhupada in his purport to the above verse states, “Varnashrama dharma was designed to enable the human being to attain his ultimate salvation. Therefore, the breaking of the sanatana-dharma tradition by irresponsible leaders of society brings about chaos in that society, and people forget the aim of life.”

This research, therefore, investigates the integral development of the child vis-a-vis the importance of understanding the profound knowledge presented in the Hindu scriptures, which can serve as a guide to bring up children holistically. When human values are embedded from childhood, then they unfold as a child grows beyond its purely genetic and intellectual dimensions, and the child is firmly entrenched on the path of spiritual growth.

Vedalankar (1985: 90) gives the example of a chair at home. “In its original state it was just a piece of wood. In the carpenter’s hand it is changed into a polished and cosy chair, and becomes an admirable object.” Similarly, parents are like carpenters who mould their children’s character with nurturing qualities of purity, truthfulness and generosity of the heart, to urge them towards righteousness and eternal happiness. Hence a knowledge of the samskaras, purusharthas and varna ashrama dharma is essential to the parents’ role of instilling high moral values in the child. It is against this background that the aims of the study are presented.

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

- Children are invaluable assets of a community. They are the backbone of a nation, and on them is dependent the future development and holistic growth of society. Since children are the future architects of society, their development must be given priority and be directed in such a way that their individuality is not suppressed while they fit into society as dynamic constructive members. Childhood is the most impressionable time of an individual’s life. Just as the twig can be bent in any way one likes, so also a child can be moulded in any way by its parents. Therefore the Vedic Rishis devised, with great care, a unique system for the development of the child through the system of samskaras, varnashrama_dharma and purusharthas.

- In general, parents in modern society are not trained to be parents. They perform their duties as they have learnt them from their parents and through general observation. At many times parenthood is taken for granted and not given the priority it deserves. This dissertation aims to emphasize the role of the Vedic scriptures in child-rearing and development, investigating the practice of samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma which would aid the parent to successfully develop the child holistically.
- Considering the very critical fact that the samskaras, purusharthas and ashramas promote cultural and social stability and success, the importance of re-evaluating philosophies leading to more relevant interpretations and discourses cannot be over-emphasized. Although attempts have been made and applications of Hindu philosophical teachings are constantly being conducted, a scriptural foundation with contemporary values as a source of reference needs to be established. The response from empirical research will be invaluable for this.
- Finally, this study aims to answer the following critical questions:
 - What are the origins and purpose of samskaras and varnashrama dharma?
 - What is the current status of practice of samskaras and varnashrama dharma in the target community?
 - Can a relevant coherent source base for Hindu philosophical literature be developed in order to assist the integral development of the child?

1.3 PROBLEMS

One of the problems the researcher was confronted with was the limited - at times, complete lack of knowledge of the respondents, of the samskaras, purusharthas and ashramas, which made it difficult to ascertain valid information. At times, it seemed that respondents were unaware that important information on

child development was present in Vedic teachings. Thus the questionnaire was, in itself, as it turned out, of limited value. Hence the qualitative approach was pursued with single/double parents, practising priests and academics. Greater understanding and depth of the subject matter was evident with interviewees. Another problem was the apathy shown in filling the questionnaire and returning them timeously. Respondents lost their copies. More questionnaires were printed and handed out. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed. A hundred were returned of which only 80 were completed. Hence, the interviews significantly enhanced the findings from the questionnaire.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher, as a single parent and an educator, distinctly observed behavioural problems portrayed by children who came from dysfunctional families, abusive situations and circumstances where children were exposed to drugs and alcoholism. From the researcher's observation, single parents faced greater challenges and financial constraints and thus spent very little time with the child. Some parents barely knew their children because they spent most of the time in a creche or were placed in the hands of a care-giver. Often care-givers merely took care of feeding and clothing the child. In some cases children had to return from school and fend for themselves until the parents returned late from work. Thus, due to such circumstances and lack of proper knowledge and guidance, children are straying from the path of meaningful development towards drugs, prostitution, teenage pregnancy and suicide.

It therefore becomes evident that the inculcation of the ideals of samskaras is vital. The pre-natal samskaras help to develop the bond between parents and children from conception, and the process of imparting samskaras (impressions)

on children begins to form. After birth, the process and the bond will not cease even if experience of modern life keeps child and parent apart.

Thus being a devout Hindu and a single parent, I found it imperative to obtain knowledge on parenting skills from the Hindu scriptures and to equip myself and other parents with the knowledge and skills required to assist us to perform our duties adequately and develop children holistically.

The following sections examine significant research methods and approaches used in collecting and analysing data.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review serves a very important purpose in selecting topics. This process eliminates the chances of selecting an irrelevant or outdated topic. Rubin & Babbie (2001: 120), as cited in Vos et al. (2005: 124), reiterate that “an early review of the literature is a prime source for selecting a topic to begin with, as it provides substantially better insight into the dimensions and complexity of the problem.” Some of the other reasons for literature review are as follows:

- Discover if someone else has already done the same research. It saves time and avoids duplication.
- If a researcher finds that the specific topic has been already researched then she/he could identify weaknesses and shortcomings and indicate that the proposed study will fulfil a proven need. Marshal and Rossman (1999: 43) as cited in Vos et al. (2005: 124).

The main purpose of a literature review is to use the existing literature to justify your current research. In this research, the researcher reviews information on samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma using existing literature as well as collecting data on current perspectives and examining their validity in the

modern age. This topic focuses on the practical implementation of knowledge from Hindu scriptures for the holistic development of the child.

The literature review embraced various distinguished authors, such as Vedalankar, Swami Sivananda, Swami Tejomayananda, Dhunnookchand and many others that are cited in the chapters that follow, and their views on samskaras, purusharthas and varnashrama dharma. These authors have given an elaborate account of the above topics, but for the most part they do not offer an easy to follow step-by-step process for the practical implementation of complex Vedic teachings. This study emphasizes the need for parents to equip themselves with these teachings so that child-rearing would be an easy and rewarding task. The Vedic teachings of samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma promote cultural and social stability. The inculcation of spirituality at this young and tender age is essential for the progressive development of the individual. Although attempts have been made, a scriptural foundation addressing contemporary problems of the current stage of kaliyuga has not been firmly established. Chapter 2 will engage more critically with the concepts of samskara, purushartha and varnashrama dharma.

The biographies of saintly personalities, Mirabai, Sarada Devi, Prahlad and Goswami Tulsidas are analysed in order to understand how samskaras, purusharthas and varnashrama dharma were applied in their lives. Their biographies and related literature were accessed from libraries, and books were also obtained from India and Mauritius. The review will focus on certain aspects of Rama Leela (pastimes of Rama) and Krishna Leela (pastimes of Krishna). This will be done by analyzing the 'Ramayana' and books depicting the pastimes of Krishna. The personalities reviewed from Hindi literature represent extraordinary individuals in some of whom samskaras etc. were innately inherent, irrespective

of whether or not they were formally inducted. For general humanity, the appropriate way is to follow the path set down by scripture. This is where the focus of this study is relevant: the acquisition of character strengths through deliberate nurturing and assessment of the development levels of personalities like Prahalad, Mirabai and Tulsidas. This study aims to promote and support the integral development of the child, to review and study the literature from Hindu scriptures in order to offer modern perspectives that may be used to strategize ways in which the relevant philosophies may be included in our daily lives by using the lives of great personalities as role models.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Cohen and Manion (2000) as cited in Ramson (2006: 31) regard the purpose of research as a quest for the truth. In conducting the research, the researcher employed both theoretical and empirical methods. The data was collected by means of structured questionnaires, general observation, and interviews with religious leaders, priests and single parents.

1.6.1 EMPIRICAL APPROACH

“The creation of new knowledge is the primary means by which people attempt to understand their universe” (Bauselle: 1986: 3). “The empirical approach is a scientific undertaking that requires logical systematic reasoning, which aims to discover new facts and verify the old ones” (Chirkut: 2005: 80).

Heppner et al (1992: 80), as cited in Vos et al. (2005: 71) state that “science serves to advance knowledge to make discoveries and to acquire facts.” This empirical method contributes to more valid data collection than the quantitative type of approach. Its open-ended nature allows for everyday conversation and participant observation. The qualitative approach assisted the researcher to gain a

deeper understanding of what was being observed.

Through the use of a questionnaire, the empirical approach was employed which allowed for a statistical sample of an entire group to be examined and analysed in a short period of time. Ethnomethodological and empirical approaches were used, since they allowed for greater social interaction and enhanced data collection (Chirkut: 2005: 80).

1.6.2 TRIANGULATION

Triangulation is the combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Creswell (1994: 174), as cited in Vos et al. (2005: 361), the “concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in a particular data source, investigator and method would be neutralised when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators and methods.” Using the triangulation approach, the researcher gained multiple perspectives of the study. The multiple perspectives assisted in achieving the objective. Neuman (2000: 124-125) as cited in Vos et al (2005: 362) states, “by measuring something in more than one way, researchers are more likely to see all aspects of it.” Thus the triangulation method assisted the researcher to gain confidence and a deeper understanding of the survey. This method also assisted in achieving the objective. In this survey the triangulation method involved questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. This research required a quantitative and subsequently a qualitative perspective. The use of both these approaches in the study allowed the researcher to achieved different insights into the problems. The table below shows a comparison between the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

1.6.3 A COMPARISON OF THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

Table 1

QUANTITATIVE APPROACH	QUALITATIVE APPROACH
Epistemological roots in positivism	Epistemological roots in phenomenology
Utilise deductive logic	Utilise inductive logic
Seeks to control a phenomena	Seeks to understand a phenomena
Results appear in numeric form and are eventually reported in statistical language	Participants' natural language is used in order to come to a genuine understanding of their world
The research design is standardized according to a fixed procedure and can be replicated	The research design is flexible and unique and evolves throughout the research process
Data is obtained systematically and in a standardized manner	Data sources are determined by information richness of settings; types of observation are modified to enrich understanding
Accurate and reliable through validity	Accurate and reliable through verification

Adapted from : Vos et al (2005: 75)

1.6.4 QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

The questionnaire focused on the quantitative approach, which helped answer the critical questions. The questionnaire consisted of mainly 'close-ended' questions and a few 'open-ended ones.' Refer to appendix A for questionnaire survey. Babbie (2004: 396) defines quantitative analysis, "as that by which researchers convert data to a numerical form and subject it to statistical analysis."

This means social science data converted into readable form. “Examining relationship between and among variables is central to answering questions and hypotheses” (Creswell: 2003: 153).

1.6.5 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

“Qualitative research can be described as any social science research that produces results that are not obtained by statistical procedures or other methods of quantification” Bouma and Atkinson (1995: 206). The essence of this approach is to view the events through the lens of the interviewee. “This qualitative data technique was more useful since it was more flexible which allowed speakers to answer from their own experience” (Chirkut: 2005: 77). In this approach, confidentiality of names and statuses of respondents were maintained so that this encouraged people to speak freely. Qualitative research can be time consuming, but is beneficial to retrieve in-depth perspectives from interviewees. For this research, the interviewees did not feel comfortable being tape-recorded, so points were made on the interview schedule. The qualitative approach involved semi-structured interviews and was more flexible as compared to the quantitative approach interviews that consisted of a questionnaire. The researcher preferred to use ethnomethodological and empirical approaches since they allowed for greater social interaction, clarity and in-depth investigation in collection of data and the confirmation of findings.

All questions on the interview schedule were ‘open-ended’. (Refer to appendix B for interview schedule.)

1.7 ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Harold Garfinkel, a sociologist states that, “People are creating social structures through their action and interactions that they are creating realities through making sense of life they experience” (Babbie: 2004: 38).

“The aim of ethnomethodology is to uncover attitudes in the speakers’ daily lives. It also enables researchers and participants to develop a social and communicative environment when they respond to one another” (Chirkut: 2005: 79). Thus the researcher made use of this method during participant observation at different events as pointed out on Table 2 and during interviews. It enabled the researcher to establish the depth and quality of knowledge that the respondents possessed on the Vedic teachings and collect comprehensive data from the elite informers to achieve her aims. During participant observation the researcher was able to uncover attitudes of the respondents on the relevance of the samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma in modern times and how parents could implement these teachings in their daily lives. It also helped the researcher to understand to what degree the respondents were deeply committed to the dharmic principles laid down in scriptures. The researcher attended a number of social gatherings at various organisations and venues for the participant-observation segment of the research.

According to Cohen, Manion and Marrison 2001, as cited in (Ramson: 2006: 51) “these could be written at several levels, viz. quick, fragmentary jotting of key words / symbols; transcriptions with greater detail; fuller description giving an account of what has occurred; pen portraits of participants; reconstruction of conversations; descriptions of the physical setting of events; and description of behaviours events and activities.” The researcher for this study jotted down key points while observing lectures, seminars, fasts, festivals and rituals at various

organizations. The interviews were conducted with semi-structured interview schedules. From these events, important observations were made on ways and means to implement the Vedic teachings at various opportunities. It was observed that the various organizations do not focus on topics pertaining to the social ills of society. They merely observe the fast / festivals and rituals on the Hindu calendar. The researcher used opportunities that were presented to her to bring to the attention of the congregation the social evils of society and how they could be eradicated using knowledge from Hindu scripture. The participant observer position assisted in gauging the positivity or negativity shown by people to learning the Vedic teachings. Thus the ethno methodological approach helped the researcher to interact closely with the elite informers. Refer to Chapter 4 for details on analysis of data. The table below indicates the events attended by the researcher:

1.7.1 EVENTS ATTENDED BY RESEARCHER TO ENHANCE STUDY

Table 2

Events	Date	Venues
1.Festivals and discourses	1995 – 2006	Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding
2. Delivered discourses and attended festivals	2000 – 2006	Sri Vishnu Mandir Chatsworth
3.Delivered discourses and attended talks/festivals	2003 – 2006	Sri Luxmi Narayan Temple– Avoca
4. Delivered discourses on Ramayana and Gita and attended festivals	2004 - 2006	Woonathie Sabha – Merebank
5. Attended festivals, satsang and delivered discourses on spiritual topics.	2002 – 2006	Ram Mandir-Harinagar
6. Attended Durban Diwali festival	2004 – 2006	North Beach
7. Sri Hanuman conference	2003	Divine Life Society of SA La Mercy
8. Art of Living programmes	1998 – 2006	Various venues
9. Art of Living conference – One World One Family	2006	Bangalore, India
10. Attended spiritual discourse	2005 – 2006	Chinmaya Mission Chatsworth
11. Vivah samskara	Regularly	Various venues
12. Upanayana	2006	Sadha Shiv Mandir Shallcross
13.Annaprashana Samskara	2005	Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding Chatsworth
14. Sannyasa Samskara	2005	Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding Chatsworth
15. Antyeshti	Regularly	Various venues

1.8 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the planning of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured to include the two categories of society and general questions, ie. single / double parents and practising priests. The first section of the questionnaire covered ‘close-ended’ questions on general information, which means that they were quantitative and required the respondents to insert a ‘tick’ in the appropriate block. The ‘close-ended’ section of the questionnaire took a great deal of planning and was structured under the following headings.

1.9 GENERAL INFORMATION

The respondents were required to insert a tick for: age, sex, marital status, education, occupation, home language, religious affiliation and religious scriptures.

1.10 SINGLE/DOUBLE PARENTS

Under this section there was one ‘open-ended’ question and the rest of the questions that followed were ‘close ended’. The ‘open-ended’ question aimed at discovering whether the parents understood what the term samskara meant. In the “close ended” questions, the respondents had to indicate if they performed samskaras and, if they did, which ones were performed. Respondents had to indicate how relevant the samskaras are in the modern times and how they would rate the status of the samskaras. Respondents had to indicate if the samskaras were essential for the physical, intellectual and spiritual development of the child. The respondents were also required to state whether they, as parents, were happy performing the samskaras in a simplified way and if they would be interested in information for future explanations, understanding and performing of the samskaras.

Single / double Parents had to answer questions on the ashrama system, varna (caste system), Hindu rituals, fasts, festivals and satsangs.

1.10.1 ASHRAMA

In this segment of the questionnaire, five questions were ‘close-ended’ and one was ‘open-ended’. The respondents had to indicate if they understood the ashrama system. If the response was yes, they had to explain why. The respondents had to state if they thought the ashrama dharma is necessary in the modern age, and if so, should it be adapted to modern times. The respondents had to give their personal opinions if they thought the various stages of social order would uplift peoples’ lives.

1.10.2 CASTE SYSTEM (VARNA)

The respondents had to indicate if they believed in the caste system, if the caste system had any relevance to modern society, would they like their children to follow the caste system, should certain castes perform samskaras only, or all people should be allowed to perform all samskaras, and if they thought that proper understanding of the caste system would help the child develop holistically. All questions in this segment were ‘close-ended’.

1.10.3 RITUALS, FASTS AND FESTIVALS

Hindu rituals, fasts and festivals play an important role in the development of the child. Thus the respondents needed to indicate what religious observances the family followed, did they think the religious observances would assist their child’s holistic development and which of the rituals, fasts and festivals they observe; how their children are presently educated through the religious observances. Respondents also had to state how they prayed as a family, did they have a shrine at home, when does the family observe fasts, and if they did, does

the whole family fast. Finally, in this segment respondents had to indicate which religious observances the child enjoyed most.

1.10.4 SATSANG

In this section on satsang, the questions were 'close-ended'. Satsang plays a vital role in connecting the child to spirituality. The following questions were designed to elicit whether the scriptures are explained to the children in a simplified version:

- How often does the child attend satsang? If the response was yes, then which types of activities will interest the child.
- Do the children look forward to attending satsang? As a single or double parent, do you feel attending satsang will help your child develop holistically.
- Indicate some of the reasons for attending satsang. Finally in this segment the respondent needed to answer a very important question: "Has attending satsang helped you and your children to lead a better life?"

1.11 PRACTISING HINDU PRIESTS

Under this section, the questions on practising Hindu priests were divided into three categories, which were: relevance of samskaras, ashrama system and the Hindu scriptures. They had to respond with their expertise and practical points of view. As practising Hindu priests it is important for them to be well versed in the shastras and guide society with their knowledge.

1.11.1 THE RELEVANCE OF SAMSKARAS — PRIESTS' VIEW

The practising priest as respondents had to answer, 'open-and-close-ended' questions on the relevance of samskaras. Of the seven questions four were 'open-ended'.

1.11.2 ASHRAMA

The priests had to indicate in the 'close-ended' questions, if they thought ashrama dharma should be followed. If the ashrama dharma is adapted to suit the modern era, will it help uplift the lives of the people? As Hindu priests, which of the mentioned aspects did they think were relevant to the integral development of the child.

1.11.3 SCRIPTURES

Under this sub section the priest had to focus on the Hindu scriptures. The following questions were answered. What appealed to a priest about scriptures? Do scriptures have the solution to our problems? At what time do you seek solace from scriptures? Did they find the teaching of the scriptures would impact on the development of the child? In the priests' opinion, did the teaching of the scriptures help to build a better society. As priests, did they feel that parents in modern times need to be well versed in their scriptures and follow them properly so that they teach by example.

1.12 GENERAL

The questions under general were for all categories of people to complete, whether single / double parents or priests. Out of eleven questions, two were 'open-ended' and nine were 'close-ended' questions. The questions in this section were designed as follows. Did the respondents believe that children should be given an all-round education — moral, intellectual and physical? If

yes, what in the respondents' opinion were some of the activities that could be engaged in to ensure the holistic development of the child? If no, state areas that need to be incorporated in the school curriculum. If the respondent in this section was a parent did he/she face the responsibility for integral development of the child? Did the respondents think that learning the mother tongue well and studying the scriptures would greatly contribute to the holistic development of the child? Did respondents feel that if children learnt their mother tongue and studied the scriptures, they would bond with their culture? If the respondents were divorced or separated, he/she had to describe their offsprings' behavioural pattern. As a divorced respondent what strategies were employed to cope with their child's development? As respondents did they have any aspect to add about complete education and development of the child? Finally, did the respondents think that anything was lacking in the present educational system? If they answered in the affirmative, an explanation was needed. After the structure of the questionnaire was completed, the researcher had to deal with the next step of obtaining data through sampling.

1.13 THE SAMPLE

The empirical research was conducted by means of questionnaires on an opportunistic sample basis in order to evaluate and examine observances of samskaras, purusharthas and ashramas in modern times. The quantitative research method can be used to survey large samples of respondents and then make the necessary generalizations from findings. Longmore et al, (1996: 55) state: "The ultimate goal of a survey is to provide representative information about a group from which the sample was drawn." The quantitative approach allows for the use of questionnaires for the 'sample' which has proved to be largely successful in most research studies. The data gathered from a sample is much easier to analyse than that from a population, which can be tiresome and time-consuming.

Furthermore, analysing larger quantities of material can be wasteful when a smaller quantity would be sufficient. The respondents were given ample time to complete the questionnaires.

1.14 THE DOMAIN FOR COLLECTION

The investigation concentrated on domains such as Hindu temples, educational institutions, family, friends, neighbours, priests, single / double parents and seminar centres. Various residential areas in Durban were selected for the sample which covered Mobeni, Chatsworth, Shallcross, Malvern, Phoenix, Reservoir Hills, Stanger, Verulam, Westville, Effingham and Durban Central. The researcher, being a resident of Shallcross, had easy access to the respondents closer to her home and temple organisations closer to Chatsworth.

1.15 QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION AND ADMINISTRATION

The questionnaires were distributed and administered in the venues selected by the researcher. The researcher's first main target areas were Chatsworth and Shallcross, since a larger number of Hindus reside there. The researcher handed at least 20 questionnaires to each temple in and around Chatsworth and Shallcross and members of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh. Most of the respondents were willing to complete the questionnaires. There was no time spent with respondents, and very little guidance was offered to them. Many of the questionnaires were completed partially. Notwithstanding this, the questionnaire response was satisfactory. Thus the researcher recognized the need to obtain further clarity from respondents and enhance the level of research through interviews. Elite informers were interviewed because they were well versed with Hindu scriptures and could answer 'open-ended' questions with depth and richness. Ten elite informers were interviewed: a principal, who is also a practicing priest, a doctor who is a member of the Divine Life Society of S.A,

The Head of the Sarada Devi Ashram, a member of the Hare Krishna Temple, three members of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh of S.A., a priest from the Arya Samaj and two members from the Hindi Union of Mauritius. These informers were able to enhance the data collection with their deep knowledge and understanding of Hindu scriptures. Refer to Chapter 4 for their responses.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the motivation, the aims, problems, hypothesis and different methods used for collecting data. It also gives a brief discussion on sampling and the domain of data collection. The next chapter will detail the literature review on the samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma.

CHAPTER TWO

SAMSKARAS, PURUSHARTHAS AND THE VARNASHRAMA DHARMA

2.1 WHAT IS SAMSKARA?

Vedalankar (1998: 88) states that “samskara means the act of purifying, reforming or bringing about refinement. Every person wishes to see that his or her child grows up to be a person who is cultured and of good character. The religious ceremonies that are intended to ensure that a person follows the path of dharma in life are called samskaras.” Samskara creates an imprint on the consciousness that would determine the future quality of life. Pious activities are conducive to right living while negative influences have an adverse effect on a person’s character. The sixteen samskaras are intended to empower the life of an individual and enable him to progress towards the ultimate goal of life.

“In the journey of life, samskaras could be regarded as milestones indicating physical, psychological and moral development of an individual while also preparing the person spiritually, socially and culturally to assume the appropriate duties and responsibilities of adulthood. Ideally samskaras educate and form the yardstick for an individual’s values in their pursuit to perfection and purify the consciousness of the whole human being” (Mittal and Thursby (ed): 2004: 333).

The mind of the individual tends to become corrupt very easily and develop qualities of anger, greed, envy and pride. The Bhagavad Gita As It Is (1993: 16.21) qualifies the above statement with the following verse:

tri-vidham narakasyedam dvaram nasanam atmanah
kamah krodhas tatha lobhas tasmad etat trayam tyajet

Translation: “There are three gates leading to this hell — lust, anger and greed. Every sane man should give this up, for they lead to the degradation of the soul.”

For the sake of personal aggrandizement one may resort to lying, cheating, deceit, arrogance and even crime. By eradicating these qualities from one's consciousness, a person's dignity and value are enhanced. But it is not simple to make one's life free of these faults without a concerted and disciplined effort to free oneself from these questionable values. Uncontrolled behaviours have to be curbed and new paradigms established on the basis of righteousness.

The samskaras show the direction that must be followed to achieve the highest ideal at every stage in life. By means of the sacraments the most auspicious influences are brought to bear on the child from the gestation period. In order that the life may be purposeful it has to move in the direction that will produce a desirable result, avoiding a fruitless, mundane existence (Vedalankar: 1998: 89).

2.2 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SAMSKARAS

The samskaras have evolved to give direction to life at every crucial stage of development. They keep an individual away from performing acts which transgress nature's laws. If the rites and rituals that are prescribed for each samskara are understood and explained in an appropriate way, it then becomes relevant and valuable to the individuals' growth. "Several cultural, moral, social and spiritual purposes are attributed to the performances of the samskaras" (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 5). Some of the purposes are as follows:

2.2.1 ERADICATE EVIL AND SUMMON BLESSING

According to Dhunnookchand (1997: 6), "blind faith and superstitions have generated the belief that evil forces are capable of harming and even hampering the progress of man.

Therefore, through the performance of appropriate ceremonies, at different stages in life, these influences could be removed and blessings attracted.”

2.2.2 A PURIFYING FEATURE

It is believed that every child is impure at birth since he carries the impressions of the previous birth. By performing the samskaras, the adverse impressions are purged and the child is able to get a clear understanding of his current life and build a life on good values. Hence samskaras are meant to raise him to higher levels of living. Properly observed, samskaras attune the entire family including parents, grandparents, relatives and friends to a pattern of life necessary for attaining the highest goals of human existence. Impurities are washed off by the impact of samskaras (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 6-7).

2.2.3 EXPRESSION OF JOY AND SORROW

Samskaras are performed to express joy and sorrow. The birth and marriage of a child bring joy and satisfaction. Death is a sad event, which brings sorrow. Joy is expressed in various ways, whereas sorrow is expressed in only one ceremony i.e. funeral ceremony. The rites and rituals help to give solace to the bereaved through prayers. Nevertheless the death (antyesti) samskara is beneficial to the deceased (Dhunnookchand: 1997:7).

2.2.4 LIBERATION (MOKSHA)

Samskaras are also important for the attainment of ‘moksha’ (liberation). It is popularly believed that one who performs all the samskaras can be freed from the transmigration of the soul and end the material miseries of birth, death, old age and disease. The evolution of the person is meant to lead to the attainment of the ultimate goal of human life — liberation of the soul.

2.2.5 DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

Moral culture entails refined manners, discipline of the senses, and control of the mind and cultivation of virtues. Whatever be the religious significance of the samskaras, it has been accepted that they enhance the proper development of personality. Instead of allowing an individual to grow without any direction, sages have prescribed samskaras as the guidelines that give direction at every stage in the development of man. The teachings that accompany the ceremonies performed on the occasion of samskaras impress on the mind of children the importance of an organized and disciplined life. Samskaras help in the physical, intellectual and spiritual development of an individual (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 8).

The study of religious scriptures and the influence of saintly and learned persons help to transform the life of a growing child. There was a miraculous change in the life of the robber Ratnakar, after he met Narada Muni. With positive change in his personality, he shaped his destiny to become Valmiki Muni, the author of the Ramayana. The rituals that form part of samskaras leave a lasting impression on the mind of the child and therefore evil influences can be warded off. The parents and other family members also become conscious of their duties and responsibilities.

2.2.6 UNIFORMITY IN CULTURE

Dhunnookchand (1997: 9) states: “While prescribing samskaras, sages felt that there was a need to evolve a type of uniformity in Hindu Culture. To a very great extent they have been successful in this task. The diversity of beliefs and practices in Hinduism has given shape to a variety of rites, rituals and religious observations. The samskaras permeate all these as a unifying factor.”

It is undeniable that modern Hindus overlook most samskaras. Only a few are performed. There seems to be a lack of knowledge on this significant topic and

priests do not highlight the importance of many of the samskaras. Religious reformers, teachers, preachers and priests have to play a motivational role to ensure that the observances of the samskaras are revived and assistance to perform them in the Hindu household is provided. These rites are forms of initiation for the individual so as to facilitate his journey on the ladder of spiritual evolution, while living a worthy life in society.

2.2.7 SAMSKARAS ARE LIKE SIGNBOARDS

“Samskaras are considered as signboards in life. Signboards give directions to travellers especially on the cross roads and the traveller chooses the path most convenient for him to continue his journey. Similarly, each samskara is a preparation for the next part of the life journey until the final goal is reached.

Samskaras contribute to peace, progress and prosperity in life. Sage Gautama has enumerated forty-eight samskaras and other scholars have recommended sixteen samskaras. It is regrettable nowadays that samskaras are overlooked by most of the Hindus” (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 9).

Most of the samskaras may not be practical or convenient because the way of living has changed considerably. This does not mean that we should disregard these rites. Knowing their importance and sacredness, we should apply them in the best possible way and maximum benefit could be derived from them. However, one must remember that these are means and not the end. Only a few samskaras are performed, some of them have been neglected and forgotten. Some people know only two samskaras, namely - marriage and funeral. Ignorance about the need and importance of samskaras has resulted in the neglect of this vital practice. Religious reformers, teachers, preachers and priests have to play a significant role to ensure that practice of the sixteen samskaras is revived. According to the Hindu way of living, sixteen samskaras should be performed during lifetime of individuals who live up to the envisaged lifespan.

2.2.8 SAMSKARAS GROUPED INTO FOUR CATEGORIES

The researcher proceeds to explain the significance of the sixteen samskaras. These sixteen samskaras may be grouped into four categories, which represent four important stages in life.

A — pre-natal samskaras

B — childhood samskaras

C — educational samskaras

D — post educational samskaras

A. PRE-NATAL SAMSKARAS

A(i) Garbhadhana samskara — ceremony of conception

A(ii) Pumsavana samskara — ceremony of procreating a male child

A(iii) Simantonayana samskara — hair parting ceremony.

B. CHILDHOOD SAMSKARAS

B(i) Jatakarma samskara — birth ceremony

B(ii) Namakarana samskara — name giving ceremony

B(iii) Nishkramana samskara — ceremony of taking the child out for the first time

B(iv) Annaprasana samskara - ceremony of giving the child solid food to eat

B(v) Mundana samskara or Chudakarma samskara — ceremony of cutting the hair (tonsure)

B(vi) Karnavedha samskara — ceremony of piercing the lobes of the ears.

C. EDUCATIONAL SAMSKARAS

C(i) Upanayana samskara — initiation ceremony

C(ii) Vedarambha samskara — commencement of the Vedic study

C(iii) Samavartana samskara — convocation or graduation ceremony.

D. POST EDUCATIONAL SAMSKARAS

D(i) Vivaha samskara — marriage ceremony

D(ii) Vanaprastha samskara — retiring from worldly activities

D(iii) Sannyasa samskara — ceremony of renunciation

D(iv) Antyesti samskara — funeral ceremony.

A. PRE-NATAL SAMSKARAS

The marriage institution has to be accepted with many responsibilities. One of the most important of these is the act of procreation, which is deemed to be very sacred. It is an invitation to the soul, which is part and parcel of God, to become an integral part of one's life.

Swami Paramananda (2002: 11) states that “parents are instruments through which a soul comes to this university of life.” With this in mind, certain rites and rituals are performed by couples who are planning a family. By performing these rituals, they desire to bring a healthy child into the world and commit to be responsible for all the needs of the child.

In the married life of a Hindu, the act of conception, instead of being merely biological in nature, has to be preceded by a ritual. Hinduism has given much importance to the ceremony of conception. The continuity of family lineage is considered sacred. Life begins in the embryo after fertilization. The first samskara, which is Garbhadhana, relates to the process of fertilization.

Garbhadhana pertains to this process by means of which a man deposits his seed in the womb of a woman. The act of co-habitation is not merely for the satisfaction of sensual pleasures but for the procreation of the human species. Generally, the period from the 4th to the 16th night after menstruation is to be chosen for this rite.

A (I) GARBHADHANA SAMSKARA (CONCEPTION)

“The initial samskara is the garbhadhana or the rite of conception. The mother’s womb is the fertile ground where the seed is to be sown. “Garbha” means womb and “dhana” means to sow or to seed. Therefore sowing the seed or injecting the sperm in the womb is called garbhadhana. Inviting a soul into the womb is a highly sacred act and is preceded by rites, rituals and ceremonies, which traditionally were performed by learned pandits” (Swami Paramananda: 2002: 9-11). This ceremony is rarely performed in South Africa. Nowadays, in the married life of Hindus, the act of conception is merely biological in nature. Sometimes conception is just an accident. There is no consideration given to the sacred nature of this act and it is merely a question of sense gratification. Birth control methods have obliterated the spiritual nature of conjugal relations. Moreover, abortions are reaching high proportions in South Africa on account of unwanted pregnancies or, as in India, the gender of the foetus.

This samskara plays an important role in the development of the child as the Vedas and grihyasutras include prescriptions for the diet of the mother for healthy, intelligent and good children.

However, the garbhadhana samskara has great significance for both the parents as well as the child, though rarely performed. According to Dayanand Saraswati (1957: 49), “as the grains in the field become strong through the fertility and soundness of the field and seed, so does progeny become good and healthy by the maturity of strong and fully developed male and females.” Therefore, for the purpose of this samskara the wife should be at least 16 years of age, having practiced the disciplines of celibacy and having been given a sound education in matters of health and nursing. Without attaining the age of 16 years, the womb of a female does not have the capacity for the development of the foetus, and her body does not become fit and mature to ensure and preserve conception. Special

oblations are made during the samskara for successful impregnation, for healthy offspring and to prevent miscarriage.

Prayer is also directed to the effect that the child born should not be deformed in anyway or stillborn. Some of the relevant mantras that are uttered during the Garbhadhana samskara are as follows:

Om Vishnu yonim kalpayatu twastht rupani pinshatu
a sincatu prajapatir dhata garbha dadhatu te swaha

Translation: O Lord! Bless us with conception so that we may bring forth a child into the world. May the womb be healthy for the development of the embryo and may the vital airs in the womb give life and invigoration to it.

Om garbha dhehi sinivali garbha dhehi saraswati
garbha te ashvinau deva va dhattam pushkara sraja swaha

Translation: O Lord! Bless our efforts to have a child and bless the conception and pregnancy. May the embryo be protected and preserved by the vital air in the space of the womb. Bless us, O Lord, in our desire.

Om hiranyayi arani yam nirmanthato ashvina.
tan te garbha havamahe dashame masi srutave swaha

Translation: O Lord! May the embryo with pulsating life grow unhindered in the womb. May the womb remain pure and resplendent as the embryo develops and may, in due time, a healthy and strong child be born with your blessing (Hemraj and Rambilass: 2003: 2).

It must be stressed that the state of mind of the woman during conception affects the child. Parental demeanour and eating habits are important considerations. The overall purpose is to make the physical, mental and emotional environment conducive to welcome a new soul to the household.

A (II) PUMSAVANA (CONCEPTION OF MALE CHILD)

“The second pre-natal ceremony is the pumsavana samskara. The purpose of the rite is to obtain a strong and worthy male child. It is fixed in the third or fourth month from the period when pregnancy has been assured,” (Gopalakrishnan: Vol. XV111 No.2: 1994: 53).

Pumsavana is meant to stimulate, consecrate and influence the foetus to bring about a male child. “The woman who undergoes this samskara fasts and bathes in preparation for it. During the ritual process she ingests a concoction of yogurt mixed with grains or beans and a whitish fluid from a banyan branch is poured down her nostril. The resemblance of these substances to semen is unmistakable and the fertility symbolism of the rite is unambiguous” (Mittal and Thursby: 2004: 340).

A male child is desired so as to continue the lineage of family. Nature has no gender discrimination. However Hindu society has favoured male progeny for further reasons — for the continuation of rituals for the benefit of the departed, the socio-economic welfare of families etc. from which female off-spring were excluded since they were married off at a tender age. If the ancient ideal of continuity of lineage of humankind is still a compelling issue, then it must be emphasized that male and female are equally necessary for procreation.

A (III) SIMANTONNAYANA (HAIR-PARTING)

Simantonnayana samskara is performed during the fourth month of pregnancy for the healthy mental growth of the child. A special prayer is offered. According to Pandey (1987: 64), “the purpose of this samskara was partly superstitious and partly practical. People believed that a woman in her pregnancy was subject to attacks of evil spirits and some rites should be performed to ward them off. The spiritual purpose was to grant health and prosperity to the mother and long life to the unborn child.”

The following verse is recited for the well being of the child:

Om dhata dadatu dashushe praci jivatam ukshitam,
ayam sumatim va jinivati idam dhatre idanna mama

Translation: O God! By your Grace we are blessed with strength and virtue! May the mother enjoy even greater health and vitality for the sake of the baby as it develops in the womb. We offer this oblation to You, O God, who blesses those who sustain others. (Hemraj and Rambilass: 2003: 4).

The mother's hair is combed and adorned. Special care is given to the head symbolizing the avoidance of anxieties and worries. Since a cheerful mother influences the mental development of the child, the need for peace of mind, happiness and love are emphasized during this ceremony.

At present times, these three pre-natal samskaras are generally not performed in South Africa but it is interesting to note that the task of the mother is similar to that of an architect who designs and carves the personality of the child. The deep emotion that a mother undergoes plays a vital role in the growth of a child within the womb (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 14-15).

B. CHILDHOOD SAMSKARAS

B (I) JATAKARMA SAMSKARA (BIRTH CEREMONY)

Jatakarma is the first samskara to be performed after the birth of the child, typically taking place immediately after the delivery. Ayusya (long life), also part of the birth ceremonies, entails uttering the names of those who have lived long lives to ensure the longevity of the child. Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (6.4.24-28) provides us with a very early description of this ritual, in which the newborn is placed on the lap of the father who whispers into the child's ear various sacred syllables, a secret name, and the word "vac" (speech) three times.

The father prays: “In this boy may I prosper a thousand-fold and thrive in my own house. Rich in offspring and livestock, may disaster never strike his line. Svaha!” (Mittal and Thursby: 2004: 341).

The term Jatakarma itself indicates the action which demarcates the separation of the child from the womb into the external world. It is the rite which is performed as soon as the child is born, or at “severing the umbilical cord.” Nowadays, children are born in hospitals and a religious ceremony is not generally performed. The newly born child is welcomed in the world by his parents who pray for his long life, intellectual advancement and physical growth.

This ceremony is conducted in two parts, namely Medhajna (acquiring knowledge) and Ayusya (long life). The former is a prayer to the Almighty for appropriate knowledge and mental development of the child, while the latter is performed to ask earnestly for a long life so that while acquiring necessary skills and virtues, he can grow into full manhood.

“A ‘Yajna’ (sacrifice) is performed on this auspicious day. The father writes the word ‘AUM’, the symbol of the Absolute, on the tongue of the newborn baby with a golden stick dipped in a mixture of clarified butter (ghee) and honey. Afterwards, the father whispers the words ‘Aum Vedosi’ — ‘Thou art Veda’ — in the ears of the child” (Hemraj and Rambilass: 2003: 6).

B (II) NAMAKARANA SAMSKARA (NAMING CEREMONY)

Namakarana, the naming ceremony of the child, is prescribed for the eleventh or twelfth day after birth, allowing for the period of impurity to pass. Together with the horoscope and time of the child’s birth, an appropriate name is given. A different secret name is given to the child during the birthing ceremonies. On the day of this samskara, after the infant is bathed and dressed in new garments, it

receives its new name, marking the child as an individual and beginning the process by which a child is gradually inducted into the world around him or her. In Hinduism auspicious names are recommended, such as those affiliated to a deity, a lucky constellation, or a desirable quality (Mittal and Thursby: 2004: 342).

According to Dhunnookchand (1997: 18), “Hindus believe that the name of a child has the power to guide, control and influence his character and thus great importance is attached to ‘Namakarana.’ A suitable, pleasant and appropriate name is carefully chosen and given to a newborn baby. The name chosen provides a source of inspiration and affects the cosmic vibrations which influence the life of an individual.” The birth of a child is always regarded as an important social event marked by merriment, feasting and the offering of gifts. Relatives, friends and well wishers are invited to share the joy and participate in the ceremony.

During the ceremony, the meaning and importance of the name is explained. The name should be sweet, beautiful, pleasing, auspicious and easily pronounceable.

The following verses of the Ramacharitamanasa indicate that the naming ceremonies of Rama and his brothers were performed:

Kari poojaa bhoopati asa bhakha, dharia naama jo muni guni raakhaa.
inha ke naama aneka anoopaa, main nripa kahaba svamati anuroopaa.

jo aananda sindhu sukharaasee, seekara ten trailoka supaaasee.
so sukhadhaama raama asa naamaa, akhila loka daayaka bishraamaa.

bisva bharana poshana kara joee, taakara naama bharata asa hoee.
jaake sumirana ten ripu naasaa, naama satruhana beda prakaasaa.

Translation: “Holy sir! Kindly assign them names that you have fixed your mind upon.” “Their names are many and unique; yet O King. I will declare them according to my own discretion. This eldest boy of yours, who is an ocean of felicity and embodiment of joy, a particle of which fills the three worlds with delight, has for his name ‘Rama’, the very home of bliss and the comforter of all the worlds. Your second son, who sustains and supports the universe, will be called ‘Bharata’. While he, whose very thought destroys one’s enemies is celebrated in the Vedas by the name of ‘Shatrughna’. (Balakand 196: 3/5)

The preceptor gave these names after careful thought and according to their character. The four sons lived up to their names.

B (III) NISHKRAMANA SAMSKARA (FIRST OUTING)

The second important step in the life of a new-born baby is being brought out from the nursery and confinement. This samskara is performed in the fourth month. It is an important occasion when the infant gets familiar with the environment. Divine blessings are invoked for the child, by performing a Havan. Parents pray for the health and longevity of the child. Every important step in the progressive life of the child was a festive occasion for the parents and the family and celebrated with appropriate religious ceremonies. On an auspicious day the newborn is taken out of the house for the first time and exposed to the environment.

B (IV) ANNAPRASANA SAMSKARA (FIRST FEEDING)

There comes a time in the life of every child when he or she has to be weaned away from the mother’s milk. This is yet another occasion when divine blessings are invoked. The samskara emphasizes the physical and mental growth of the child. The Grihyasutras and the Smritis of Manu and Yajnavalkya recommend this samskara in the sixth month of the child’s life. Sushruta, the father of Ayurveda, has also recommended that the child be introduced to various foods in the sixth month.

The foods he prescribed were easily digestible as well as beneficial to the growth of the child and were to be given in small quantities. The first food was a sweet mixture of milk and rice known as kheer (Gopalakrishnan: Vol.XV111: 1994: 62).

Nowadays, other types of food such as cereal and boiled food are also given. “Jaisa anna vaisa mana” ie food makes up thoughts. Food has an impact on the mental impressions of the mind. Therefore, the right food is chosen and prayers are offered to God so that the child may have an efficient digestive system.

A havan is performed and God’s divine blessings are bestowed upon the child for physical and mental development.

B (V) MUNDANA OR CHUDAKARMA SAMSKARA (CEREMONY OF CUTTING THE HAIR OR TONSURE CEREMONY)

The tonsure or shaving of the head for the first time is performed when the child is between one and three years of age. The main purpose of this ceremony, as mentioned in the scriptures, is for long life, stamina, beauty and purity of the child. According to Hindu scriptures, shaving of the hair and cutting of the nails remove impurities, give long life, strength, purity and beauty.

“When the shaving is over the father takes curd or milk cream and smears the head of the child so as to alleviate burns and to heal cuts if any. An important feature of the ceremony is to dig a pitch in the forest and bury the hair or to put it in cowdung. The hair is a part of the body and in order to prevent its use by any evil-monger, it must be buried in the ground” (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 25).

In the Sutra Treatises, two suitable times are suggested for chudakarma or removal of hair ceremony to be performed. One is in the first year after birth, and the second is in the third year.

B (VI) KARNAVEDHA SAMSKARA (EARLOBE PIERCING CEREMONY)

The Karnavedha samskara is performed for both males and females in the third or fifth year from the date of birth. The right ear is pierced and then the left. A goldsmith normally does the piercing. Once the ear is pierced the goldsmith puts a soft wire in the pierced hole to prevent it from closing. He also applies a cream so that the ear does not get infected and heals soon. The relevant mantras are recited during the piercing of the ears.

C EDUCATIONAL SAMSKARAS

The researcher further examines the educational and post educational samskaras which are linked to the ashrama dharma (duties at different stages) and the purusharthas (aims of life). An exhaustive outline and the categories relating thereto have been enunciated at the beginning of chapter two.

Using the table below, one can examine how the ashramas, samskaras and purusharthas are designed to assist the holistic development of the child. There are many factors that influence the life of an individual. Cognisance must be taken of the physiological, psychological, sociological and spiritual development of the child. Parents, grandparents and in some cases the extended family, as well as the environment, are responsible for moulding the life of a child.

The purusharthas, which are the aims and objectives of man's life, are dharma (virtue, morality, righteousness), artha (wealth), karma (enjoyment, pleasure, desire, passion) and moksha (liberation). These Vedic teachings assist the parents, teachers and other caregivers to consciously become aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the development of the child in accordance with tradition and dharma. It is important to note that the ashramas begin with dharma and end with moksha, with artha and karma merely intermediary stages permitted to man.

ASHRAMAS, SAMSKARAS AND PURUSHARTHAS

Table 3

STAGES OF LIFE (ASHRAMAS)	SACRAMENTS (SAMSKARAS)	AIMS (PURUSHARTHAS)
1. BRAHMACHARYA	<p>PRE-NATAL SAMSKARAS</p> <p>Garbhadhan</p> <p>Pumsavana</p> <p>Simantonnayana</p> <p>CHILDHOOD SAMSKARAS</p> <p>Jatakarma</p> <p>Namakarana</p> <p>Nishkramana</p> <p>Annaprasana</p> <p>Mundana</p> <p>Karnavedha</p> <p>EDUCATIONAL SAMSKARAS</p> <p>Upanayana</p> <p>Vedarambha</p> <p>Samavartana</p>	DHARMA
2.GRIHASTHA	Vivaha	ARTHA & KAMA
3.VANAPRASTHA	VANAPRASTHA	MOKSHA
4.SANNYASA	SANNYASA ANTYESHTI	MOKSHA

(Adapted from Rambilass: 2003: 4)

The researcher now proceeds to analyse the importance of the educational samskaras, the Upanayana and Vedarambha in the life of an individual as he enters the Brahmacharya ashrama and receives knowledge based on dharma, which is the first purushartha. An individual's life should be regulated by the principles of dharma from conception to his funeral pyre.

C (I) UPANAYANA SAMSKARA (INITIATION CEREMONY)

This samskara is performed between the ages of 5 to 8 years. 'Upa' means near and 'naya' to lead. Upanayana is related to learning. It is a purificatory rite for a child who seeks learning. It is called the sacred thread ceremony. This thread is the yajnopavit (sacred thread), which consist of three separate strands. The sacred thread symbolizes the vow of the child to follow the path of scriptures. This concentrated period of study requires discipline and restraint of the senses. Students develop these virtuous habits through the practice of celibacy, various austerities and simple living.

The Yajnopavita (sacred thread) donned on the occasion of upanayana is to be worn daily as a reminder of the responsibilities of a life of purity and righteousness. One who has undergone upanayana is referred to as twice born or dwija, since the first is his physical birth. After initiation the child becomes a dwija or twice born (i.e. his second is the spiritual birth).

At the end of the ceremony the mother, father, teachers, friends and relatives pray to God for the child's well-being. With the performance of the Upanayana ceremony of the child, his first lesson bearing on simplicity begins, irrespective of the position or status of the family in which he was born. He begs for alms first from his mother, his sisters or relatives. This samskara depicts equality among all students.

In the Ramayana, Rama and his brothers underwent the same training in the Gurukul of Vashistha Muni, although they were of royal lineage. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, Sri Krishna collects wood for fuel in the forest along with his friend Sudama during his studentship at the Gurukul of Sandipani Muni (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 36-38).

C (II) VEDARAMBHA

The next educational step is Vedarambha, which is preparation of the student after upanayana to take up studies of scriptures in a gurukula. In addition to religious teachings, secular knowledge is imparted. Religious studies lead to attainment of liberation while secular knowledge prepares the student for Grihastha Ashram (Subramaniam: 1994: 65).

The samskaras, namely the Upanayana, Vedarambha (which are performed for entrance into the brahmacharya ashram) and the Vivaha (which marks the entry into the grihastha ashram) are closely connected and associated with the brahmacharya and grihastha ashramas respectively. The vanaprastha and sannyasa ashramas are the later ashramas, which follow after the aspirant has sufficiently evolved in his spiritual quest. It must be noted that some great personalities qualified worthy to become sannyasis without having to go through the second and third stages viz, grihastha and vanaprastha. Notable examples are Sankaracharya, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati and Vivekananda.

There now follows a summary of the ashramas and their relevance in the context of the samskaras and purusharthas.

2.3 ASHRAMAS

The Vedas have formulated the ashrama dharma for proper development of man. It consisted in dividing the life of the individual into four stages. The four ashramas or stages in the journey of life are as follows: Brahmacharya ashrama (the student life), grihastha ashrama (the householder life), vanaprastha ashrama (the life of retirement or renunciation), sannyasa (the renounced order).

A child needs to acquire proper knowledge of all stages as he/she moves smoothly from stage to stage. Even though in modern times this division of life cannot be strictly followed, we can adapt the stages to suit our needs, eg. a child's schooling life and tertiary education can be equated to the brahmacharya stage, after which he marries, and when an individual retires from work, vanaprastha can be observed.

People who are committed to spirituality sometimes take the renounced order. The entry into sannyasa ashrama rarely takes place in contemporary society.

2.3.1 BRAHMACHARYA ASHRAMA

After the Vedarambha is performed, the individual enters the first ashrama, which is Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya means self restraint or celibacy; the student acquires education whilst being chaste in thought, word and deed.

In accordance with the precepts of Hinduism, the aim of life is liberation from material entanglement and rebirth. To fulfil this aim, Hindu religion points to the four purusharthas, which are dharma (religious duties),

artha (economic development), karma (sense gratification) and moksha (liberation).

The first purushartha, (dharma) is emphasized at this stage. Through the passage of time dharma took on many meanings and, among others, indicated duties, values and virtues. According to the Sage Manu, a person pursues dharma to help his evolution to the next world. Therefore, at the brahmacharya stage very significant qualities are inculcated in the student so that he would be able to effectively manage all stages. It is only through dharma that one attains moksha or eternal bliss. Dharma involves many virtues for everyday living, such as truthfulness, control of mind, non violence, simplicity, restraint of anger, contentment, religious austerity, alms giving, offering oblations to ancestors and purity in thought, word and deed. Thus to make gradual spiritual progress, dharma is the first purushartha.

Swami Prabhupada (1998: 34) states that, generally, people understand dharma in terms of pious and impious activities, but the Srimad Bhagavatam (1.2.9) says, ‘dharmasya hy apavargyasya nartho ‘rthayopakalpate’: “Dharma should be executed not for material benefit but to nullify the miseries of material existence.” Therefore, whether you are rich or poor, you have to undergo the tribulations of material existence. A rich man cannot avoid old age, death and disease. The same miseries are there for the poor man. So the real benefit of dharma is to nullify the material miseries.

2.3.2 GRIHASTHA

The word ‘grihastha’ is derived from the root ‘griha’, which means house. So Grihastha means householder. The word vivaha etymologically means ‘to support or sustain’. Support what? Dharma is the answer (Ayer : 1987: 42). Vivaha samskara heralds the entry of the young individual into Grihastha Ashrama (household life) with a suitable partner. The vivaha samskara is not a mere ritual; it contains rites, rituals and mantras whereby the marital couple commit themselves to each other, promise to be faithful, to share whatever they possess and respect the rights of each other as individuals.

The marriage samskara is the most important of all the samskaras. The samskara help men and women to perform the duties and responsibilities of house-holder life. According to Yajnavalkyasmriti (1-51), marital life helps one to fulfil prescribed duties according to the purusharthas. Many grihyasutras and dharmasastras begin their exposition of samskaras with marriage, since all other ceremonials and rituals are dependent on the success of marriage. (Mittal and Thursby: 2004: 348).

Vivaha (marriage) is starting life according to the principles of Grihastha Ashrama, the second stage of life as a householder. Hindu scriptures glorify the life of the householder. It is considered to be the best ashrama (stage) and is regarded as the pivot of all social activities. (Dhunnookchand: 1997: 41).

In grihastha ashrama stage one acquires a wife, property, children and wealth. Just as all creatures depend on air, so also all the other ashramas are dependent on the grihastha ashrama. The welfare of the family and of the nation depends on the householder. In fact, grihastha ashrama is based on the pillars of mutual respect, devotion, love between husband and wife and also on the relationships which develop among the various members of the family and, in turn, within the community.

Marriage is regarded as being essentially a sacrament and a religious duty and not simply a contract. It is a union of two souls and is necessary for the development of both husband and wife. Marriage must not be regarded only as a means to obtain sensuous pleasure, but as a sacrament. The sage Manu considered marriage as a social institution for the regulation of proper relations between husband and wife. He added that the householder is to acquire wealth through honest means and he should distribute it properly. He can have legitimate pleasure, but he must not go beyond the limits of ethical law. Desire or enjoyment within socially accepted limits is the basis of this institution.

Grihastha ashrama is described as the sacred field of all achievements and it is said to offer the best scope for the realization of the first three purusharthas (ends of life), namely dharma, artha and karma.

Artha includes material comforts and economic welfare. Acquiring material possessions in a legitimate way is essential for a happy and healthy marriage (Rambilass: 2003: 14). To Hindus, even material wealth is related to dharma. Money should not be the ruling principle in material prosperity and enjoyment of the pleasures of life (Dhunnookchand: 2003: 161-162). Man must realize that wealth is not the ultimate goal of life, the final objective being liberation from birth and death.

As grihasthas, couples are allowed to engage in their natural sexual desires (karma) according to the norms of morality (dharma). It is only in this stage of life that cohabitation is sanctioned.

It is the duty of the householder to use karma (sexual desires) to procreate. It is one of the responsibilities that grihastha ashram is governed by. However, karma and artha must be sanctioned by dharma. Unrestrained sexual indulgence leads to destruction. People stepping in the grihastha ashrama are allowed to enjoy life, but without the feeling of lust and greed. Endowed with a spiritual attitude and sense control, man would not go astray and he will ultimately free himself from the cycle of birth and death.

2.3.2.1 EIGHT FORMS OF MARRIAGE

Hindu law recognized eight kinds of marriages. Four kinds of marriages are approved, one is tolerated and the other three are disapproved. Hinduism gave recognition to eight types of relationships within marriage to include all these relationships within boundaries of sound responsibility and recognition. The smritis have recognized the following marriages: Brahma, Daiva, Arsa, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasha and Paisacha.

1. Brahma: This type was supposed to be the purest type of marriage. It was performed by brahmans. The father gave his daughter to an honourable groom who is highly educated and of noble character. The father receives the bridegroom with dignity and respect and gives his daughter in marriage to ensure her future happiness

2. Daiva: literally means divine. It was called daiva because the girl was given as a gift to a priest who officiated a sacrifice or ceremony. People thought it meritorious to give their daughters away in marriage to a priest.

3. Arsa: According to this method, the father of the bride received from the bridegroom a gift. It was not the brides price, but there was some consideration for the gift, though the father of the bride did not want to make a bargain out of it. Such a marriage was current mostly in the priestly class.

4. Prajapatya: This marriage is for the sake of procreation and performing one's duty towards prajapati. The bridegroom would come himself to ask for the girl's hand in marriage.

5. Asura: this is where the husband, after having paid money to the relatives of the bride and the bride herself, accepts her out of free will. Today we still have this kind of marriage in different guises. Many people will not take a partner who is not affluent.

6. Gandharva: Where the girl selects her own husband and their meeting results in a sexual relationship from which a child is born.

7. Raksasa: this is when the bridegroom captures a girl who was still mourning over the death of her parents or relatives whom he had killed or injured. The bridegroom did not seek the consent of the father or the girl herself, but took her away by force.

8. Paisacha: this is an unapproved marriage, where the bridegroom took possession of the girl without her consent. It includes cohabiting with the girl who is unconscious, sleepy or intoxicated. It is a barbaric, uncivilized form of marriage (Pandey: 1987: 158-169).

Thus the union by marriage is necessary for the continuation of the human species. Parents with mutual love and respect are great role models and shoulder their new responsibilities with commitment and dedication. The marriage ceremony, which is performed around a sacrificial fire accompanied by Vedic hymns, gives a deep religious significance to the marriage ceremony. Vicissitudes of life make it grow stronger and more stable. Difficulties should be handled in a responsible way.

2.3.2.2 MAHAYAJNAS (DUTIES IN THE GRIHASTHASHRAMA)

In the Grihastha ashrama, great emphasis is put on the daily performance by the house-holder of the five great sacrifices, known as the Pancha Mahayajnas, namely Brahma Yajna, Deva Yajna, Pitri Yajna, Bhuta Yajna and Manushya or Atithi Yajna.

BRAHMA YAJNA

The Brahma Yajna is intended for the preservation, by means of constant study, of the knowledge one has acquired during brahmacharya ashrama. It consists in the study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures. The householder should

keep up the level of culture so laboriously acquired and at the same time transmit it to the safe keeping of the next generation.

DEVA YAJNA

‘Deva’ means God. God is the giver. He gives us light, knowledge and everything that exists. That is why he is called Deva. The Deva Yajna is performed by means of devotional offerings in the sacred fire. It symbolizes the recognition, with gratitude and humility, that whatever man possesses or does, in fact, belongs to God. The spirit of Deva Yajna is benevolence, unity, sacrifice and renunciation.

PITRI YAJNA

‘Pitri’ means parents, elders or ancestors. The Pitri Yajna implies the duties of the householder towards mother, father and the aged members of the family to whom he owes his physical heredity and who gave him early nurture. In fact they deserve our grateful remembrance because they bring up their children by providing them with all the necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter and education. Therefore, it is the duty of the householder to take care of them in old age.

BHUTA YAJNA

‘Bhuta’ means one that has life, ie. a sentient being. Bhuta Yajna consists in offering to nature’s elements by giving food to animals, birds, the sick and the needy. This sacrifice is very important as it attenuates the selfish tendencies in man and requires him to share his possession not only with his needy fellow beings but also with animals.

ATITHI YAGNA

‘Atithi’ means guest. This sacrifice is accomplished by offering hospitality to the learned one, guests, saints, students and the needy. ‘Atithi’ etymologically means

“unexpected” guest. One has to welcome unexpected guests as a matter of duty. The idea of service is embodied in this yajna. The beauty lies in serving with love and devotion.

“Householder’s duties are manifold; however, if one keeps the essential principles in mind, one’s specific duties will be easily fulfilled. When parents produce children, their responsibilities extend to ensure their children make a noble generation. The life of the grihastha should be spent in moulding the child’s character. A noble person will bring all kinds of prosperity in the future, material and spiritual, to himself, his family and society” (Swami Tejomayananda: 2004: 108).

2.3.3 VANAPRASTHA ASHRAMA

From grihastha ashrama one moves to vanaprastha ashrama. At this stage the vanaprastha samskara is performed. In this ashrama one slowly withdraws from worldly life and spends more time spiritually. As vanaprasthis, the husband and wife do not have the same relationship as before; they assist each other to seek the Truth and as friends travel together towards the goal of liberation.

The practice of Vanaprastha is the preliminary step towards total renunciation after completing the obligations of married life. Vanaprastha is a life of detachment from the turmoil of family life, seeking emancipation from worldly bondage as a preliminary preparation towards complete renunciation, sannyasa, and the final goal (Tiagarajan 1994: 29).

Vanaprastha is a combination of the words ‘vana and prastha’, which means ‘forest’ and ‘to leave for’ respectively. Vanaprastha literally means to leave for the forest. It also signifies an attitude of voluntary renunciation. At the age of fifty when the individual leaves the Grihastha ashrama, the samskara for the vanaprastha ashrama is performed. At this stage, all one’s wealth is handed over

to those who are entitled or suitable for such an inheritance. After relinquishing attachment to the material world, the ageing person is free to devote the rest of his life to spiritual pursuits (Vedalankar: 1985: 100).

In the modern age, it is clearly not practical to retire to the forest. However, one may engage in deep study of scriptures, as well as serve the various religious institutions. Religious institutions require help to provide better services to the community.

The vanaprasthi devotes himself to service of the whole of humanity without any hope for reward. Sometimes it is not practical for an aged member of family to retire to the forest, and Manu says that “he may live under the care of his son with a spirit of renunciation.” The spirit of renunciation or detachment is imperative for social progress. As a householder, the individual is attached to the activities of the world. In the vanaprastha stage he should renounce this attitude.

In fact, if someone clings too much to materialism, he falls prey to over attachment. Vanaprastha ashrama provides the solution for what is happening in society today where the aged are becoming obsessed with controlling family affairs or property.

Staying longer in the grihastha ashrama is like over staying in a guesthouse. If the rules of the guesthouse are not observed one may be evicted. In the same way staying longer in the grihastha ashrama will estrange near and dear ones. After marriage of the son, the situation changes. If the father or mother still wants to govern, a clash between father and son or between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law becomes inevitable. Therefore, before any such unpleasant incident occurs, the parents voluntarily and willingly hand over their responsibilities to the children and retire to serve the community, with the rich experience gained during a long and busy life of a householder. In the vanaprastha stage selfless service is performed. They constantly study and teach the scriptures and thus they

prepare themselves for the fourth stage in life i.e. sannyasa ashrama. The spirit of renunciation or detachment is essential for spiritual progress.

The age of retirement in course of time helps to solve the problem of unemployment to some extent. Unfortunately those who are retiring are often re-employed, thus reducing employment opportunities for youth. The retired person is still engaged in economically gainful activities. Today, the status of a vanaprasthi is judged by his wealth. It is essential to revive the ideals of the third stage of life.

2.3.4. SANNYASA ASHRAMA

Before entering each stage of the ashramas, rites and rituals of the samskara are performed to facilitate a smooth transition. At each stage the principles of the purusharthas are practised to achieve complete success. Thus the samskaras, ashramas and purusharthas if followed properly ensure success for the individual.

In sannyasa ashrama preparation for moksha begins. Moksha means freedom from worldly bondage and from desire for wealth and sense enjoyment. Philosophers and scholars agree that moksha is the highest goal (param purushartha) in the journey of life. The supreme goal of life should be continuous preparation for moksha. Thus the purpose of the four-fold formula (purusharthas) in the journey of life is to practise dharma, artha, and karma to attain moksha. Preparation for moksha is deeply rooted in the vanaprastha ashram. The unpredictability of death makes it vital that the notion of moksha be cultivated from early life.

The sannyasa ashrama is the final stage, the life of total renunciation. Entry into sannyasa is again done by performing a sannyasa samskara. This is a very austere life, when one has to be mentally and spiritually attuned to a life free from anger or desire. At the age of 75 years, or when a person is able to totally renounce all

worldly objects, one could enter the sannyasa ashrama. He has no more desire for family attachments, wealth and fame. Through spiritual practices he seeks to obtain deliverance from physical bondage. The sannyasin regards himself as a teacher of true knowledge; he becomes a friend of mankind; and the thought of parting from the world does not disturb the tranquility of his mind (Vedalankar: 1985: 100). Sannyasa ashrama is the stage of complete renunciation or the stage of asceticism. Hindu scriptures state that when an individual realizes that he has been successful in renouncing all worldly attachments and in cultivating the spirit of renunciation and has also completely attuned himself to the higher spiritual values of life, he must enter the highest stage of life, that is, the sannyasa ashrama. His one and only aim must be the realization of spiritual freedom or mystic union with the Absolute. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna that one who performs his prescribed duty without looking to the fruits of action is a sannyasi; he is a yogi, an ideal man. He renounces the world and enters into an order of divine services.

When a person is initiated in the sannyasa ashram, he thrice repeats that he renounces his family, wealth, name and fame and his mode of dress and place of residence (Swami Tejomayananda: 2004: 110).

He renounces everything so that he focuses on the highest goal (moksha). A sannyasi wears a saffron coloured robe indicating complete detachment. A sannyasi does not belong to one community or one race or one nation. He belongs to the whole world, “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.” He leads mankind along the path of truth and righteousness.

In the 18th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna defines what the renounced order is.

kamyanam karmanam nyasam sannyasam kavayo viduh
sarva-karma-phala-tyagamprahus tyagam vicaksanah

Translation: “The giving up of activities that are based on material desire is what great learned men call the renounced order of life [sannyasa]. And giving up the results of all activities is what the wise call renunciation [tyaga]. (Bhagavad Gita 18, 2)

Thus when one is in the sannyasa ashrama, the fourth purushartha (moksha) is emphasized. The sannyasa ashrama is essentially the giving up of all “I-ness” and “my-ness”. It is for the realization of the divine that resides in the self (Swami Tejomayananda: 2004: 110).

Kalidas, the great Sanskrit poet, in his immortal epic, Raghuvamsha, compares Rama, Bharat, Laksamana and Shatrughana, the four sons of Dasaratha, to the four purusharthas. It is acknowledged that none of these purusharthas ends but all of them blend together in life to constitute the ideals of Hinduism. “Dharma is the root, artha the branch, karma the flower and moksha the fruit of the tree of life. If the root is regularly watered then the branches and flowers will be healthy and yield delicious fruit” (Dhunnookchand: 2003: 64).

According to the Hindu scriptures a sannyasi is one who has attained jivanmukti, i.e. freedom or liberation while still in the physical body. The four ashramas are intended for the perfection of man by successive stages. A brahmachari does everything for himself; a householder undergoes hardship for his wife and children. He thinks in terms of his family and his children. In the vanaprastha ashram, he moves from selfishness to selflessness. He cares for all children of the community and eventually he becomes a citizen of the world in sannyasa ashrama.

Thus the ashrama system has been so framed that one progresses from attachment to detachment, from selfishness to selflessness, from individuality to universality and gradually becomes a perfect being to lead mankind. The antyesthi samskara marks the end of one's life-span.

2.4 ANTYESTI

The last sacrament in the life of a Hindu is the Antyesthi or the funeral rites, which close the concluding chapter of his worldly sojourn. While living, a Hindu consecrates his worldly life by performing various rites and ceremonies at the different stages of his progress. At his departure from this world, his survivors consecrate his death for his journey to the next world.

Hindu death rites involve the consignment of the deceased body to the fire, from which the samskara gets its other name 'smasana'. Once again the fire acts as a purifying agent, consecrating yet another transition in the life of a Hindu. The antyesthi samskara is a process involving a series of rites over several days. In preparation for the cremation, the corpse is ritually washed by members of the same sex, anointed, and wrapped in a new white shroud. The chief mourner by tradition is the nearest male relative, preferably the eldest son, who leads the funeral procession from the home of the deceased to the cremation ground.

After the cremation, the chief mourner is shaved, wears new clothes, and observes a period of mourning during which he practices celibacy and other austerities for the next ten to sixteen days, depending on the family's tradition. Close relatives of the deceased are subject to a period of ritual impurity following the death, which entails a period of social segregation as well as various restrictions in dress, diet and interaction. Within three days of cremation, the remaining bones are either buried in an urn or are cast into the flowing waters of a river by the chief mourner. Sraddha ceremonies, memorial rites performed in

many different Hindu ritual contexts, honour deceased ancestors. A special sraddha rite, known as sapindikarana is performed on the twelfth day after death. The sraddha rites are critical to the deceased soul's journey as bodiless spirit. The offerings of rice balls (pinda) and water (tarpana), offered both during the antyeshthi rites and memorial sraddha ceremonies, help the soul of the deceased to form an intermediate body so that it may cross over the river of death and join its ancestors. The sapindikaran sraddha ceremony performed on the twelfth day completes the union of the newly deceased with his or her ancestors, and Brahmans are invited to be the recipients of the feast of sraddha foods offered to the deceased.

Memorial rites are performed annually, but the sraddha ceremony immediately following death has special significance and purpose as it helps transform the newly deceased into a revered ancestor (pitr). Here again we see how the ritual process of samskaras not only signifies but actually accomplishes the transformation from one status to another.

As prenatal samskaras help the formation of a body in the womb of the mother and the later post-natal samskaras work at incorporating this body into its new environment and community, the antyesti samskaras contribute to the formation of an ethereal body and its subsequent incorporation into a new life after death. Both in life and in death, samskaras sanctify the human body; they acknowledge the transformation of the body, taking into account physical developments and natural bodily functions.

In the Ramayana, we see how the antyesti samskara was performed by Bharata, under the supervision of Vasishta. Another example is when Rama performed the final rites for Jatayu, who was fatally injured in a valiant battle with Ravana. Rama cremated the bird with a famous prayer. “Heartily permitted by me proceed to the Supreme worlds where the performers of sacrifice, those who maintain the sacred fire; those who do not turn their back on the battle-field, and the donors of land. The privilege of cremation at the hands of one who was a veritable Avatara of God could not befall the lot of any except the most sacred and holy” (Chandrasekhara: 1983: 117).

CONCLUSION

The samskaras were a gradual training in spirituality. Through them the recipient realized that all life is a sacrament and every physical action should be connected with spiritual reality. It was the way in which an active life of the world was reconciled with spiritual realization. In this way of living, the body ceased to be a hindrance, but rather assisted in attaining perfection. By performing these samskaras, the Hindus believed that they escaped physical bondage and crossed the ocean of death.

The table of ashramas, samskaras and purusharthas indicates the interconnectedness of these Vedic concepts. These significant principles of Hindu dharma make the journey of a human being smooth and harmonious in its quest for the ultimate goal of life, which is moksha (liberation). Every human being has an opportunity for spiritual evolution, through understanding the samskaras and abiding by the four different stages of life. The principles of purusharthas make the development of the aspirant progressive at each step. Thus Hinduism has provided milestones for the gradual, progressive growth of individuals from the material to the spiritual plane.

CHAPTER THREE

BIOGRAPHIES OF PERSONALITIES ELUCIDATING THE SAMSKARAS, PURUSHARTHAS AND ASHRAMAS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the samskaras and their relevance to modern society. The operation of dharma as embodied in the principles of varnashrama and the purusharthas will help the soul evolve to the Supreme Godhead. This chapter will elaborate on the synthesis between samskaras, the concepts embodied in ashramas and the purusharthas and demonstrate how it can be applied in our current time.

There is no dearth of personalities in Hindu religious history who show how, by encompassing these principles, perfection can be attained. Mirabai, Prahlad, Goswami Tulsidas and Sri Sarada Devi stand out like beacons, embracing in their lives, as they did, the spirit of samskaras, purusharthas and ashrama dharma. Although they may have not clearly followed the demarcated boundaries in the categorization of the ashramas, they understood the spirit behind them and their lives reflect their timeless values. What follows is a synopsis of their lives in relation to these principles.

1. MIRABAI

The great saint of Hinduism, an ardent follower of Lord Krishna, Mirabai was born into a Rajasthan royal family in the sixteenth century. She lost her mother at an early age. From the age of ten, her grandfather, Doodaji, raised Mira. Doodaji was also a devotee of Lord Krishna. Mira worshipped Krishna from an early age. She became increasingly absorbed in her worship of Lord Krishna and her devotion reached bhava (ecstasy). Later Mira was married to Bhojraj, the son of Rana Sanga, who was the ruler of the state of Mewad. Her devotion to Lord

Krishna did not wane and she also performed her duties as a chaste wife. But the untimely death of her husband brought an abrupt end to Mira's involvement with worldly chores (Vedalankar: 1998: 162).

Mira's devotional practices became increasingly intense. She often displayed ecstatic symptoms by singing and dancing, even in public places like temples. Mira's life was imbued with the charm and grace of bhakti. Although a princess, she relinquished the pleasures and luxuries of royal life, and lived a life of simplicity and devotion. She was fearless. All her songs in praise of Lord Krishna are inspirational and full of devotion. They are sung even today in India. Ignoring public sentiment, Mirabai danced in the streets singing the name of her Lord. To her, Lord Krishna was her real husband, father, mother, friend, protector and Guru. "Mira stands as the crest jewel among the great women of India. Her heart-melting songs, sung in praise of Sri Krishna are extremely popular" (Swami Sivananda: 1987: 87).

Her brother-in-law Vikram Singh and other members of his family expressed their dissatisfaction with Mira and her religious sentiments. But Mira had always been pious by nature, and in the face of serious adversity and hostility that had arisen, she found peace by being more deeply involved in her worship. The estrangement between Vikram Singh and Mira showed no signs of diminishing. She was ordered by Rana Vikram Singh to leave the temple and the sadhus and to return to the palace. All the evil designs of Vikram against Mira were in vain (Vedalankar: 1998: 163).

Mira's life resonates in the heart of many throughout the world, for many reasons. Mira crossed the one single structure of society that was enforced by lines of varna, (caste system). She, being a woman of 16th century, portrayed female liberation. She stood for what she valued. Mira is identified as having

rebelled against her husband and in-laws. An individual has to follow the tenets of samskaras, ashramas, and purusharthas in order to realize the human purpose of life. However, Mirabai from a very early age had already realized her ultimate goal of life, which was complete devotion for Krishna. The material world of princes, palace, family, obligations, riches, and fame held no value for her. When atma (soul) has seen paramatma (supersoul), no earthly passion or desire can shake the soul's thirst for nirvana (freedom). Although Mirabai was in the body, her eternal soul was seeking Krishna. Her intellect and discrimination were seeking paramatma. Thus one can conclude that at a very early age Mira was a spiritually evolved soul. For her life, the samskaras, ashramas, varna did not have much importance.

A thoroughly researched work on Mirabai, titled, "PITAMBARA — woman in saffron clothing" by Dr Bhagavatisharan Mishra points out that Mira's grandfather, Doodaji, distressed by the devastations of warfare, prayed for a child in his family who would promote love and devotion. Doodaji's son was Rathansingh, who was Mira's father. Doodaji took Mira away and nurtured her with all the samskaras, so that she was filled with love for Krishna and humanity (Bharati: 1997: 213).

Because her life illustrated a strong attachment to Lord Krishna it can be said that she transcended the divisions within the purusharthas and actively embodied the limbs of dharma. Her deep renunciation gave her no interest in cultivating artha or karma. Economic development or sense gratification was not her real goal, and her highest ideal was to imbibe the spirit of love of God. Although she lived in the householder ashram her qualities of tolerance, humility and devotion showed that she had imbibed the spirit of the renounced ashrama and lived it in an exemplary way. Her devotional poetry is a treasure of Hindi literature and Hindu religious practice.

2. GOSWAMI TULSIDAS

The gifted poet who composed the ‘Ramacharitamanasa’ is known as Goswami Tulsidas. His boyhood was one of poverty and suffering, but, unimpeded by these, he became a great scholar. One sentence spoken by his wife awakened in him a realization of his true goal and he subsequently became a devotee of Lord Sri Rama.

“Tulsidas, a poet and devotee of formidable stature and calibre was a saint whose difficult and obscure beginnings were startling, yet pathetic. His was a story of ‘Rags to Spiritual Riches’. The crown jewel of his riches is the Ramacharitamanasa” (Shukla: 2002: 27).

Tulsidas was born in Rajapur, in the district of Banda in Uttar Pradesh, in 1532.A.D. He was a Sarayuparin Brahmin by birth. His father’s name was Atmaram Dube and his mother’s name Hulsī. Tulsidas did not utter a cry at the time of birth. He was born with all thirty-two teeth developed (Shukla: 2002: 27).

Tulsidas made his appearance in this world at a very inauspicious time. Twelve months after his conception, he had the appearance of a five year old. One of the first words he uttered was the name of Rama. His father rejected him on the basis of these events but his mother with her loving heart could not abandon him. Thus Hulsī pleaded with the midwife Chunia to take care of the baby and soon thereafter she died. The generous hearted Chunia took care of Tulsidas in the village of Haripur. When he was about six years of age Chunia also died and word was sent to Atmaram Dube to take Tulsidas away. Atmaram Dube refused to have anything to do with the boy whom he considered a bad omen. Tulsidas had to then fend for himself (Shukla: 2002: 27-28).

Tulsidas, being barely six years old, took to madhukari (begging) for his sustenance. Those were trying times for him. At that tender age he sought divine help and began to chant the name Rama wherever he went. Thus he came to be referred to as Ramabola. He wore torn clothes and slept on the roadside or in temples. “Ramabola survived the next two years filled with these hardships, until his fortune changed. Swami Naraharidas, on passing through the village came upon Ramabola by chance, took pity on the boy and accepting him within his ranks, became his Guru” (Shukla: 2002: 28).

Swami Naraharidasa frequently recited Rama Katha (story of Rama), inculcating Rama-bhakti in him, and also made him proficient in Sanskrit grammar.

In examining the life of Tulsidas, we see that although there is no apparent evidence of pre-natal and childhood samskaras being performed, there is definite evidence of Upanayana, Vedarambha, Samavartana, Vivaha, Vanaprastha, Sannyasa and Antyesti samskara being followed in his life.

Swami Naraharidas was a disciple in the Ramananda Sampradaya. He initiated Ramabola into Rama-bhakti (devotion to Rama) and subsequently gave him the Rama mantra and named him Tulsidas. Tulsidas was a gifted pupil who showed great promise for the future. Swami Naraharidas also initiated him into the course of Vedic Study through the Vedarambha Samskara (Shukla: 2002: 28).

At Panchaganga Ghat in Kashi, a renowned scholar by the name of Sheshsanathanji tutored Tulsidas on the scriptures for the next fifteen years. As a result, Tulsidas, with his extraordinary intellectual abilities, became expert in the

Vedas, Vedangas, Darshanas or philosophies, Puranas, etc. After completing his education Tulsidas returned to his birthplace, Rajapur, but unfortunately he could not trace his family. (Shukla: 2002: 29)

While in Rajapur, a brahmin friend of Swami Naraharidas, Deenabhandhu Pathak by name, was impressed by Tulsidas's great knowledge, humility and devotional qualities. Thus Swami Naraharidas arranged Tulsidas's marriage to Ratnavali, the daughter of Deenabhandhu Pathak (Shukla: 2002: 28-29).

After completing the period of brahmacharya (celibacy), Tulsidas enters the grihastha ashrama, with the performance of the vivaha samskara. Vivaha (marriage) is starting life according to the regulations of grihastha ashrama (householder stage).

“Ratnavali was very learned and religious. She was devoted to him and together they made their home an ashrama, full of love and peace. Tulsidas was attached to Ratnavali and did not like to be separated from her” (Vedalankar: 1985: 159).

However when Ratnavali went to her father's house, Tulsidas could not bear the separation, and he went to meet her there, in breach of social rules. Ratnavali with embarrassment stated: “Thou hast no shame, for having followed me here! Fie on such love; what else can I say. Such great love for my body made of skin and bones! If you loved Sri Ram so ardently, you could overcome the fear of life and death!” (Tripathi: 1958: 91) as cited in (Shukla: 2002: 29). This type of response was not typical of the Indian women of that time. Tulsidas contemplated this remark and severed all connection with family life.

It should be noted that Ratnavali is regarded as his first Shiksha guru, to teach him detachment. “Ratnavali’s words, imbued with truth, shook off the ignorance that had shrouded Tulsidas’s knowledge assimilated over his extended period of intense study of scriptures, for one of the fundamental teachings of the Hindu scriptures is non-attachment to material things for the attainment of liberation. As destiny would have it, Tulsidas immediately left home and became detached from material life. He went to Kashi and there channelled all his love, yearning and thoughts towards his eternal object of affection, Sri Rama. He wandered in the guise of a mendicant from place to place unconcerned about food or rest and devoted all his energy to fulfilling his new aim in life” (Shukla: 2002: 30). The four purusharthas are the main objectives of man’s life. Tulsidas, due to his wife’s rebuke, moved from karma (worldly enjoyments) to moksha (liberation) and started deep contemplation on Sri Rama.

Ratnavali was highly evolved and learned. It is important to understand how Ratnavali’s profound words of wisdom had such a great impact on Tulsidas that he immediately was able to leave grihastha ashrama and enter vanaprastha coupled with sannyasa. It is not the purpose of life that one should be engaged in material pursuits indefinitely. Tulsidas, after relinquishing material life, devoted the rest of his life to spiritual pursuits. Tulsidas entered both the vanaprastha and sannyasa ashram together. He did not have a fixed abode. He belonged to the world to serve humanity. In those years of pilgrimage and travel, Tulsidas’s Rama- bhakti, ingrained in him at an early age by his guru, his knowledge acquired through years of intense study and his experiences in life began to merge and take shape which eventually led to the birth of the celebrated Ramacaritamanasa (Shukla: 2002: 32).

Tulsidas travelled throughout India disseminating Rama-bhakti. His devotion flowered spontaneously into poetry. He wrote many books, of which, only twelve are available. The magnum opus of Tulsidas's work is however, Sri Ramacharitamanasa. Besides its literary excellence, the Ramacaritamanasa is the most brilliant and arguably the most popular treatise in Hinduism on love for God. The highest virtues such as truthfulness, patience, non-violence, forgiveness, generosity, detachment, control of the sense, purity and service to humanity which are components of Indian ethics and culture have clearly been portrayed in this great epic (Shukla: 2002: 31-34)

Though essentially a poet, Tulsidas was a great devotee and teacher in human society. His own life and much more than that, the Ramacharitamanasa, moulded the thinking of the people into upholding the tenets of dharma. The overall effect of this was harmony and religious tolerance.

Historians have expressed the view that the Ramacharitamanasa can be counted among the important influences which mould people's lives and hence their spiritual paths. (Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa 1986: 23) Tulsidas left the immortal world in 1623 A.D., leaving behind the great epic, Sri Ramacharitamanasa. In addition, Tulsidas wrote the Vinay Patrika, Kavitali, Dohavali etc. Tulasidas shines like a lamp of divine guidance which dispels the ignorance of this dark age of Kali Yuga (Iron age). Tulsidas left this mortal world and entered the abode of Immortality and Eternal Bliss at the age of ninety-one at Assighat in Varanasi. The Antyeshti Samskara was completed and the ashes of Sri Tulsidas were scattered in the Ganges.

Tulasidas was known for his literary talent and actively cultivated brahminical life. Owing to his unusual early life, where his father abandoned him, not much

emphasis was placed on the observance of the samskaras. However he took to sannyasa later in his life and compiled the Ramayana. The cultivation of dharma was his one-pointed focus.

Due to having become highly evolved spiritually, the need for cultivating artha and karma was absent.

It is important to note that although Tulsidas faced many challenges, he was able to survive due to the spiritual knowledge received at an early age. Therefore it is essential to teach our children these profound values to strengthen them to face difficulties.

3. SRI SARADA DEVI AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Sarada Devi was born on the 22 December 1853, in a spiritual brahman family of Bengal in the village of Jayrambati. She was the eldest daughter of Ramachandra Mukherjee and Shyama Sundari Devi. Her early childhood was spent in a rural upbringing, in fulfilling various domestic responsibilities. She never went to school; however, she learnt the Bengali alphabet and practised reading and writing (Tapasyananda: 1992: 1).

While Sarada Devi was growing up, education was not considered necessary. Nevertheless she spent most of her time in spiritual pursuits. She would worship her deities of Kali and Lakshmi with flowers and sacred leaves.

Sri Ramakrishna, then known as Gadadhar was behaving strangely at Dakshineswar. His family felt that marriage would be the answer to his maladies. Due to poverty they could not find a bride and this made them depressed. Sri Ramakrishna, to relieve their tension stated that his bride is at Ramachandra

Mukherjee's house at Jayrambati. They went, and indeed found Sarada who was just five years old whereas Ramakrishna was twenty-three. The marriage did take place. The strange marriage of Gadadhar of twenty-three and Sarada of five years was part of a divine arrangement. The five-year-old Sarada returned to her parents, as it was customary for the wife to live with her husband only when she grew up (Swami Smarananand: 2001: 7-8).

After the marriage, Sarada had opportunities when she was seven and again at age thirteen and fourteen to meet Gadadhar and serve him. Real meaningful meeting between them took place only later, when she went to Dakshineswar to meet him under awkward circumstances. Young Sarada was eighteen, she felt very upset and was compelled by a sense of duty to be by her husband's side to serve him in his ailment, In March 1872, Sarada set out on foot for Dakshineswar, sixty miles away. Her father and some village women accompanied her (Swami Tapasyananda: 1992: 4).

Ramakrishna welcomed Sarada Devi lovingly and made arrangements for her stay. He performed his duty as a devout husband. Sarada was greatly relieved to find that Ramakrishna was not insane after all. He was kind, loving and caring. She began to serve him wholeheartedly. Her days passed in the service of her husband. Her heart was filled with pure joy. One day he asked her: "What do you want, worldly life or Godliness?" She said firmly "No, certainly I am not interested in a worldly life. I shall help you in your pursuit of God." Thus for eighteen months Sarada lived with Ramakrishna, both living in the heights of God-consciousness, without a trace of materialism.

Smaranananda (2001: 13) describes how Ramakrishna worshipped Sarada Devi: "He looked upon Sarada as the embodiment of the divine mother. So on a new moon night he decided to worship her. Ramakrishna called Sarada to his room

and asked her to sit down on a special seat. Then he began the ceremonial worship. Sarada was completely lost in herself. She was oblivious of everything. After the worship was over, Ramakrishna prostrated himself before her, seated firmly like an image and prayed, "O mother of the universe, I salute Thee again and again." Since that day, Sarada felt that a divine power had entered into her."

Tapasyananda (1992: 86-87) points out that Sri Ramakrishna has displayed the highest degree of respect for women. Through his unique divine incarnation, he lived the life of a householder and sannyasin alike. This was possible with the association of Sri Sarada Devi, who in later times distinguished her self in being a wife, a nun and a mother at the same time.

Taspayananda (1992: 87) further mentions. "The reverential attitude of Sri Ramakrishna towards the Holy Mother and women in general should be kept in mind. Sri Ramakrishna viewed women as the symbol of the Divine Mother and it is an insult to view them as sex symbols. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna maintained a filial attitude towards women throughout his life."

The simple village girl had become transformed into the holy mother; Sarada Devi. She spent the best period of her life serving Sri Ramakrishna with her heart and soul, which gave her the greatest bliss. Her entire time was thus occupied with acts of service to the master and his devotees. It was an ideal way of living in which work and worship went hand in hand and led to the harmonious development of her personality. The master showed great love and care to help her in the development of her talents both in the secular and the spiritual fields of life. He taught her how to conduct herself with dignity and success in daily life. While the master gave her an all round education, the emphasis was on spiritual development.

Mother Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated by example how to work in the spirit of love, service and harmony. They practised spiritual life to the highest degree. It is the duty of a married couple to help each other advance towards spiritual realization. Sri Ramakrishna and Mother Sarada Devi enhanced the glory of the grihastha institution by the honour and respect they had for each other. The principles emphasized by the vivaha samskara were portrayed clearly by these great personalities. Although they did not biologically procreate their own children, the entire village accepted Mother Sarada Devi as their mother and she nurtured and cared for them as an extraordinary mother because she guided them on the path of spirituality. Swami Ranganathananda (1995: 9) notes that a grihastha once asked to Sri Ramakrishna, “How can we grihasthas attain God?” Sri Ramakrishna answered, “God is within everyone. He is antaryami, inner ruler. You must remember Him always and live and do your work. Everything will be alright.”

The master’s life combined the highest ideals of the monastic life and those of the householder. The master always taught his disciples the importance of renunciation. His loving and affectionate relationship with the Mother, treating her as the first and foremost of his disciples, had lifted married life above the level of sex and made it a potent spiritual relationship.

While receiving all her loving services, and moving with her in all simplicity and childlike innocence, the master always maintained an attitude of deep respect towards her as his spiritual counterpart and fulfiller of his life’s mission.

Sri Sarada Devi received from her husband all that a Hindu wife expects. Her own mother Shyamasundari Devi felt that Sarada will not be happy as she was

marrying an ascetic. However Ramakrishna felt that she was destined to have many children who will address her as a mother. And millions indeed were her spiritual 'sons' and 'daughters' (Swami Tapasyananda: 1992: 29)

Sri Ramakrishna came to generate bhakti and jnana among man and his main teaching inculcated renunciation of lust, anger and greed. In conformity with his ideal, which was hers too, the children born of her were not physical but spiritual.

“Sarada Devi’s days at Dakshineswar passed happily. But joy or sorrow, never last forever. The master developed a throat infection which the doctors diagnosed as cancer. As he required constant care, his devotees took him to a garden-house in Cossipore, nearer to the city. She cooked for him and for the young devotees who lived there and had many opportunities to serve him. The condition was growing worse. Sarada Devi would wait on him during his midday and evening meals and one day she noticed that he looked depressed. You look troubled, she said. “Do tell me what is on your mind.” He replied in a complaining tone: “Look, won’t you do anything? Must this body do everything?” But she protested, “What can I do? I am a mere woman”. “No, no”, he insisted, “You will have to do many things”. He meant that his devotees would be in her care after his passing away” (Smaranananda: 2001: 18).

The days at Cossipore were days of agony for her. The thought that Sri Ramakrishna would leave this planet soon occupied her mind all the time. Nevertheless, she was tirelessly engaged in serving him and the many disciples who had assembled there. She had many indications of the master’s approaching end. It was in August 1886 he entered into a deep trance from which he never recovered. To deal with her grief and pangs of separation, she went on pilgrimage.

The years passed by. It was 1920. The holy mother was 67 years old. The strain of taking care of so many devotees was affecting her health. Nevertheless her compassion and love for the devotees was increasing. She was seeing the Lord in all things. No one could have thought that it was the final departure. She began detaching her mind from her surroundings and fixing it on Sri Ramakrishna.

One day a woman devotee came and saluted her. Weeping she said: “Mother what will happen to us?” In a feeble voice the holy mother replied, “Why should you be afraid? You have seen the master.” Then she added slowly “Let me tell you something my child, if you want peace, then do not look into anybody’s faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child. The whole world is your own”. This was the holy mother’s last message to humanity. The mother left the world on 21 July 1920 (Swami Smaranananda: 2001: 30-31).

It is said that the great master left the holy mother on earth to demonstrate the Motherhood of God. When we look at the life of Sri Ramakrishna and Mother Sarada Devi, we see the ideal grihastha ashram observed by both of them. Sri Ramakrishna honoured and worshipped Mother Sarada Devi just as he worshipped the Universal Mother in the temple. He placed her on the altar and worshipped Mother Sarada Devi as the embodiment of the Divine Mother of all the ashramas that of the householder being the highest. This is the time for showing virtues such as mercy, love, and generosity, patience, tolerance, purity and right judgement. Proper respect towards elders, kind and respectful treatment towards husband and children, untiring performance of one’s duty, sweet speech, humility and modesty are the qualities of a successful wife. All the above qualities were lived by Mother Sarada Devi.

Sri Ramakrishna and Mother Sarada Devi were married but they did not lead a life of passion and lust. They displayed strong and unconditional love for each other that was completely devoid of lust. Their life as householders was one of dharma only. Examining the lives of these divine souls and walking the path of dharma, our lives are sure to be successful.

The following view puts this issue into perspective: “The householder’s life is not a life of wanton lust and frivolous living. It is a strict life of selfless service, of following regulative principles and embodying acts of charity, of goodness, kindness, and austerity. All these are helpful to humanity. If you can live such a life then the life of a householder is as good as the life of a sannyasin” (Swami Sivananda: 1988: 124).

Mother Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna lived a life of sannyas although they were in the grihastha ashrama. Thus if our children can be trained in the brahmacharya ashram then all good fortune will follow. Therefore if our children can learn about these great souls and emulate them, then their lives would undoubtedly be blissful. This Great Master throughout his life showed great reverence and compassion for women. He clearly portrayed through example that there is no inferiority or superiority between the genders. This quality must be inculcated in our children.

4. PRAHLADA

Prahlada was born in a family that was atheistic. Prahlada cultivated the brahmacharya ashram from his youth. In the Srimad Bhagavatam there is reference to him describing the importance of cultivating spiritual life from a tender age.

Sri-Prahlada uvaca: kumara acaret präjno dharman bhagavatam iha
durlabha manusam janma tad apy adhruvam arthadam

Translation: Prahlada Maharaja said: “One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life — in other words, from the tender age of childhood — to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 7.6.1)

Although Prahlada went to a school which predominantly emphasized the cultivation of material values, by the instruction of his spiritual master, Narada Muni, he understood the value of the brahmacharya ashram. Then later he entered the grihastha ashram and lived as an ideal king. Because of his birth in an atheistic family, no importance was given to the samskaras. But his unflinching faith in God allowed him to transcend this shortcoming.

Later in life, Prahlada imbibed the spirit of the renouncement ashramas, namely, vanaprastha and sannyasa, and his entire focus was on attaining God realization. As regards the purusharthas, his emphasis was more on the cultivation of dharma and moksha, realizing that the cultivation of dharma would naturally lead to moksha. In dharma his emphasis was on sravan and kirtan, that is, hearing and chanting the holy names of God. He is renowned for having unflinching faith in the Lord’s protection. He placed less emphasis on karma and artha.

Prahlada’s father Hiranyakashipu had done very severe penance in order to obtain the boon of immortality from Brahma. However, on being denied the boon of immortality, he instead obtained a boon, which protected him from being killed by neither man nor animal, neither at night nor during day, neither inside nor outside, neither on earth nor in space, and neither by an animate nor by an inanimate agency. Equipped with this power from Brahma, Hiranyakashipu thought he had become invincible.

When Hiranyakasipu was performing penances, a battle ensued between the devas and asuras. Indra took away Kayadhu, the wife of Hiranyakasipu by force in order to kill Prahlada who was in her womb.

Narada intervened and told Indra that the child to be born would be an exalted devotee of the Lord.

On the words of Narada, Indra left her in the ashrama of Narada, where she began to do menial service.

At that time Narada taught her and the child in her womb the flawless path of bhakti yoga — devotion to the Supreme Lord. Narada, the powerful sage, imparted knowledge of the essence of religion, pure wisdom and discrimination between matter and spirit.

Soon after Hiranyakasipu returned, Kayadhu gave birth to Prahlada. Prahlada, while in the womb, inherited all the divine qualities of the demigods. One can conclude that Prahlada had already completed his brahmacharya while in the womb of his mother and after birth began to teach by example the knowledge of the Self and devotion. Prahlada in the foetal stages had learned mastery over his senses. Prahlada even as a young boy was noted for his spiritual qualities. Devoted to the devotees and sages, exemplary in his conduct, truthful and self-controlled, he was dear to all. Though endowed with learning, wealth and beauty he was not afflicted by pride. He was free from all desires for profit, was established in self-control and unshaken by calamity.

Prahlada was now ready to perform the Vedarambha samskara and thereafter enter into the brahmacharya ashrama. Hiranyakasipu placed Prahlada under Sukracharya for learning. He had decided to make Prahlada an instrument to

wreak havoc on Mahavishnu. He instructed Sukracharya not to teach him anything devotional. On the other hand he had to teach that Hiranyakasipu was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He learnt all this worldly knowledge very well, but his heart did not absorb the teachings. Whenever he got the opportunity, he would sing the glories of Sri Vishnu. This troubled the teachers. So they went to the King and told him all about it.

The King advised the teachers to keep a close watch over him and to see that he does not come in contact with anyone who is likely to utter the name of Vishnu. However this did not work. When Prahlad again spoke about bhakti yoga, Hiranyakasipu was indeed furious.

Hiranyakasipu's whole being raged with fury. His anger had no bounds. He pursed his lips together, and then suddenly he shouted and his voice was like that of a thunderclap. "Take that child away! Put him to death! Let me never see him again" (Swami Chinmayananda and Naik: 1969: 37-39).

Hiranyakasipu was furious at Prahlada for being a devotee of Vishnu, whom he detested. He was at his wit's end. Hiranyakasipu then made many attempts to have Prahlada killed. These attempts included:

- Having Prahlada hold a hot pole
- Making him jump off a steep cliff
- Getting an elephant to trample him
- Piercing him with poisonous spears from all sides
- Administering poison
- Throwing him into a snake pit
- He was locked up in a solitary cell for days without food
- He was burnt by fire

None of these could harm Prahlada, for he was always chanting and repeating the mantra “Om Namo Narayana” (Glory to the Supreme Lord).

Hiranyakasipu was now thoroughly frustrated. This was the first time his authority had been challenged. This was a tremendous blow to his ego. He had never known fear, failure or humiliation.

Meanwhile Prahlada, at every given opportunity, emphasized to his friends that this human birth is a rare opportunity to advance on the path of spirituality and that people should not be enchanted by the material energy of the Lord and forget the ultimate goal of life. All of Prahlad’s friends were born of atheistic, materialistic families, but fortunately they had the association of Prahlada, who was a great devotee of the Lord from his birth. As soon as there was a break, when the teacher was away, he would speak about the glories of Vishnu and the futility of pursuing materialistic goals. (Swami Prabhupada: 1991: 9-10).

Prahlada was very intelligent. He did not want to waste too much time in worldly education. According to Vedic regulations, a student’s life begins from five years of age. The ideal education is the integral development of the student in various disciplines of life. The focus is to prepare him for ultimate perfection. True education should have as its goal, enlightenment, subduing the lower natures of man and a balanced social order. The consummation and test of true education must be the natural development of knowledge, love and service. There should be a harmonious development of the head, and the heart (Swami Sivananda: 1990: 56).

Prahlada urged his friends to give up demoniac life and accept God's mercy. The five year old Prahlada was a realized soul and was able to teach God consciousness fearlessly and create in his friends the innocent love for God. The young friends of Prahlada, charmed by his word and divine qualities, threw away their toys and gathered around him enthusiastically and listened to him. These Asura boys, being pure minded, accepted the instructions given by Prahlada and then onwards did not care for the worldly wisdom of their teachers. The teachers were very perturbed by this development and reported the whole matter to their ruler Hiranyankasipu. Hearing this, Hiranyankasipu's body trembled in violent rage. He jumped up from his seat, sword in his hand, determined to kill the boy himself. Hiranyankasipu screamed, "Oh fool! You, who indulge in such senseless and arrogant talk, is now facing death. Where is the Lord of the worlds of whom you speak, if there is any such other than me?" (Swami Raghaveshananda: 2004: 34).

Prahlada very calmly replied that Sri Vishnu alone is the Lord of the universe. He is without beginning and without end. He is present in the entire universe and therefore, He alone is to be worshipped. "Fool! Is your Vishnu present in this pillar too?" "Yes, in that too," said Prahlada. "Then let him show Himself to me," said Hiranyankasipu, cutting down the pillar in uncontrolled rage.

Suddenly the pillar split into two with such tremendous force that the sound echoed in all the worlds and filled man, God, animal and demon with fear. They all trembled violently, for they thought the world would now come to an end (Swami Chinmayananda and Naik: 1969: 41).

Out of the pillar came a mighty being, half-man half-lion (Narasimha) who was neither human nor animal and he appeared during twilight (neither day nor night).

Hiranyakasipu lifted his iron mace to strike him. But Narasimha roared a tremendous roar and with great ease, he picked up the mighty demon, placed him in His lap across His thighs, and while on a threshold of the entrance to the courtyard neither inside nor outside, tore open his stomach. Brahma's boon remained intact, yet the mighty demon's life came to an end.

In examining the life of Prahlada, we see the qualities of faith and devotion represented to the highest degree. A mere five-year-old with all the major obstacles he faced, was still steeped in the path of faith, devotion and steadfastness. Thus we can conclude that the teaching he received from Narada Muni, at the foetal stage, was so profound that he did not stray away from righteousness. The atmosphere and environment in which he was nurtured was perfect. All precaution was taken at the ashram for the physical, mental and emotional development of the child. The mother was totally taken care of by feeding her auspicious foods, entertaining her with devotional songs, anointing and massaging her, so as to ensure the full and healthy development of the child. Kayadhu was nurtured and taken care of in the best possible way to ensure and encourage the highest good for the development of the foetus. Thus we see through Prahlada's example that the pre-natal samskaras had such a profound impact on the holistic development of the child.

It must be remembered that Prahladas' lifespan was not of escapism, but a positive strategy to counteract the effects of a demoniac culture promoted by his father. Had Prahlad not received the first of the samskaras, Hiranyakasipu's domination of the world would have brought much sorrow to humanity.

CONCLUSION

These personalities portray in their lives' journey the teachings of the Vedas, perhaps not in the way prescribed but by becoming focused on one of the limbs of devotional service. For example, Prahlad's focus was on sravanam (hearing) and kirtanam (chanting) while Tulsidas placed more emphasis on the philosophical cultivation of bhakti through knowledge. Likewise, Mirabai being steeped in devotion, used her poetry in sutras (condensed form) to bring out her deep spiritual sentiments. Although Sarada Devi sought help from the practices of jnana (knowledge) and karma (practical application), she disseminated her religious teachings in the form of profound realized truths based on devotion.

Again, their lives establish the principle that behind the letter, the spirit of the rule needs to be imbibed and spontaneously lived by deep attachment to their objects of devotion. The presence of the samskaras and some of the ashrama elements in all of them is established. These personalities had evolved gurus or divine inspiration to inculcate the value of the samskaras. In the present stage of human development the auspicious influences of the samskaras can be acquired by performing and observing them as prescribed in our Hindu texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE AND OF INTERVIEWS ON SAMSKARAS, ASHRAMAS AND PURUSHARTHAS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of this chapter are based on questionnaires circulated on a random sample basis mainly in Durban. However, Hindi-speaking people from Mauritius answered 5%. There was one person from Bangalore who was able to be an elite informer on some general questions. The questions were answered scantily and many questions were unanswered. Due to insufficient information obtained from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with elite informers. Using the triangulation approach i.e. quantitative and qualitative methods, data was collated and discussion proceeded with the interpretation of graphs that were drawn up using the questionnaire survey. A discussion from semi-structured interviews was conducted with elite informers. Various themes emerged from the interviews. Hence the responses from the interviews will be discussed under the following themes: knowledge, marriage, child and spirituality, holistic development of the child, parenting and religion, and healthy life style.

General information: respondents came from the following places: Durban, Verulam, Reservoir Hills, Clare Estate, Asherville, Merebank, Nagina Township, Pietermaritzburg, Effingham Heights, Shallcross, Malvern, Queensburgh, Overport, Harinagar, Phoenix, Mauritius and India.

The aim of the study is to show the need to introduce samskaras into the daily lives of children so that they can develop holistically. The analyses of the questionnaires revealed trends with regard to the thinking amongst parents and priests on various issues and what they consider to be the best method of spiritual education for their children.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

4.2.1 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Table 4

	Percent
Sanathanist	73.6
Arya Samajist	12.5
Shaivite	2.8
Vedantin	2.8
Other	1.4
No Affiliation	6.9
Total	100.0

This section was aimed primarily at parents in order to gauge the “degree of religiousness” by the type of organization they belonged to and the type of scriptures they read. The above table indicates a breakdown of religious affiliations. It is observed that almost all respondents belonged to a formalized, structured religious sect of Hinduism. According to the research 73.6% indicated that they were Sanathanist, only 12.5% were Arya Samajists, 2.8% were Shaivite, 2.8% were Vedantin. 1.4% stated other and did not specify affiliation.

Those that belong to some religious sect generally performed at least two of the most common samskaras that is vivaha and antyeshti. However, some Sanathanists and Arya Samajists performed almost all the samskaras.

Religious affiliations indicate that Hinduism gave an individual a wide variety of preference, as it believes that several approaches lead to God.

4.2.2 FREQUENCY BY RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION OR MOVEMENTS

Table 5

	Percent
Ramakrishna Centre	6.7
Divine Life Society	6.7
Hare Krishna	3.3
Sai Baba	10.0
Hindu temple	65.0
Other	8.3
Total	100.0

Table 4 indicates the breakdown of religious organizations. More than 90% of the parents belong to some organization or follow some type of religious path. The respondents belong to various structured organizations: 6,7% are devotees of the Ramakrishna Centre, 6,7 % indicated they belonged to Divine Life Society, 3,3% of the respondents were from the Hare Krishna Temple, 10,0% were from the Sai Baba organization. The majority of the respondents belonged to Hindu temples that did not follow a particular Guru or teaching.

Many respondents belonged to more than one organization. 8.3% did not specifically state which organization they belonged to.

It is important for children to be aware of the variety that Hinduism offers and the power of free will within its tenets that allows them to develop their spirituality.

4.2.3 RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES READ/AND FREQUENCY

Table 6

	Percent
Vedas	11.0
Gita	30.1
Ramayana	31.5
Other	12.3
None	15.1
Total	100.0

Swami Sivananda (1987: 52) states: “The knowledge of the holy Vedas was revealed to the ancient rishis by God Himself, when they sat in deep meditation with a calm and pure mind”. Vedas are said to be the source of all knowledge. Yet the Vedas are not deeply explored due to language barriers as well as time constraints.” From the above table only 11.0% of the respondents indicated that they read the Vedas. The popular scriptures that were read by the respondents were the Gita and Ramayana. 30.1% stated that they read the Gita and 31.5% of the respondents indicated they read the Ramayana. The Ramayana and Gita play an integral role in the lives of South African Hindus. Eight days before Krishna Janmashtami emphasis is laid on various chapters of the Gita. Nine days before Rama Naumi almost all Hindu temples recite the Ramayana. The Ramayana appears to be more popular because it can be recited in various ragas (tunes) and talas (beats). From my observation and experience, many Hindi speaking people are very interested in reading the Ramayana. In order to do that, they had to learn the Hindi language. Being a Hindi teacher for many years, I used the Ramayana to promote and propagate the Hindi language. In my weekly classes, I introduced and taught the recital of one doha or one chaupai per week. In this way, students wanted to continue learning Hindi in order to advance in the study of the

Ramayana. A senior lady of 65 who suffered from many ailments attended my Hindi classes, just so that she could read the Ramayana. In an informal discussion with my students she stated, “By reading the Ramayana, I found peace and joy, this is my pastime, and it keeps me well occupied in my old age.” Many older folk seem to find solace in reading the Ramayana especially when they are lonely and sad. 12.3% stated they read religious books written by various saintly personalities. 15.1% indicated they do not read any scripture at all. Some of the respondents stated “Hindu scriptures cater for human life from birth to death, inclusive of all aspects.” Another stated, “The Vedas give us a chance to escape by pointing out the paths of religion, economic comfort, regulated sense gratification and the means to get out of the miserable condition entirely.” Respondent 7 felt that stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavat Purana are excellent examples of scriptures that demonstrate how the individual can develop holistically.

4.2.4 FREQUENCY OF READING RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES

Table 7

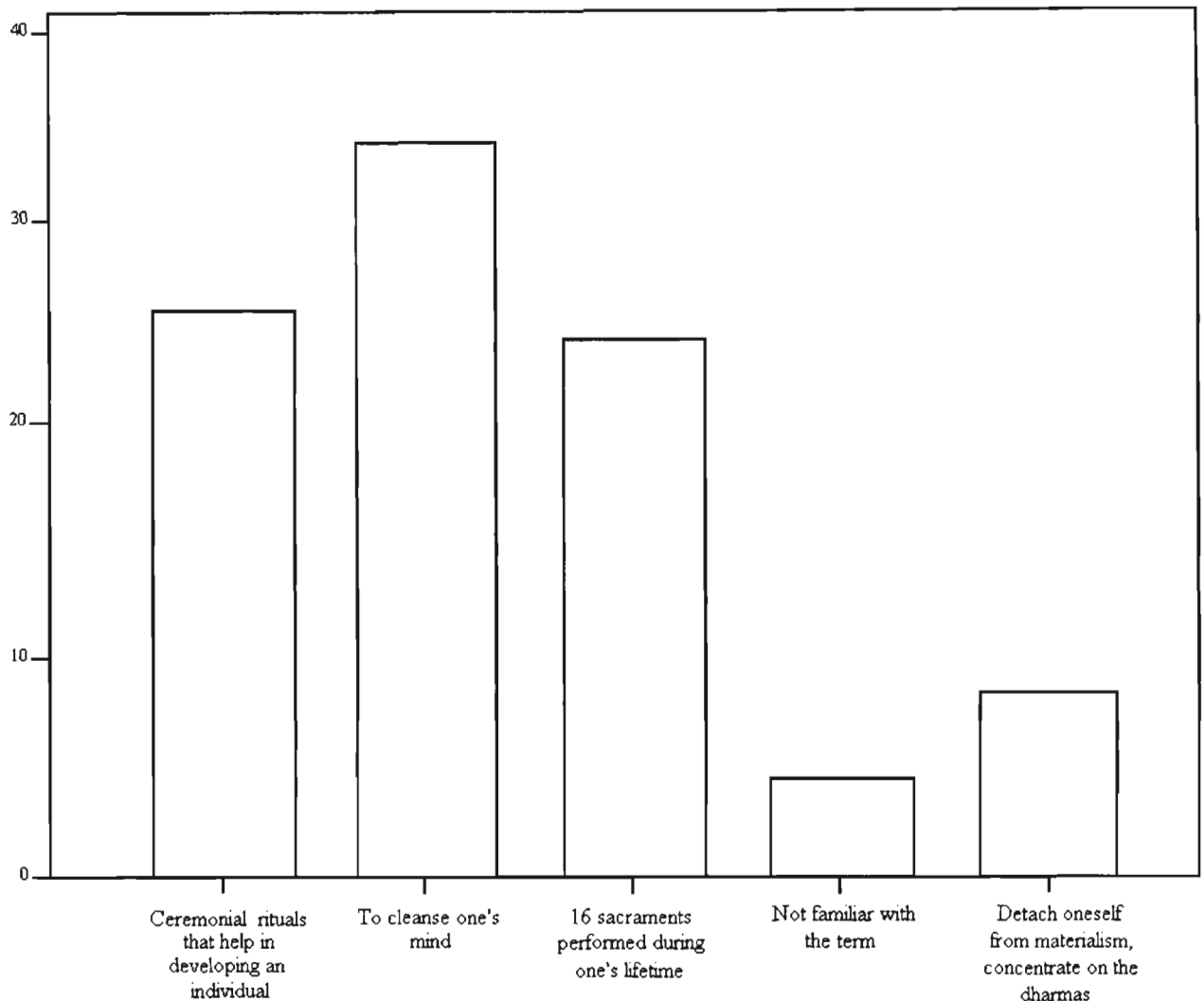
	Percent
Frequently	53.4
Occasionally	27.4
Rarely	9.6
Never	9.6
Total	100.0

53.4% of the respondents indicated that they read their religious scriptures on a regular basis. A respondent to the questionnaire survey suggested that, “Hindus should make a concerted effort to understand the knowledge in scriptures, as this will assist them greatly in child rearing and all other aspects of life. Every

evening as a routine some knowledge of scripture should be disseminated to children. Children love stories. Moral values can be easily inculcated with the use of stories found in scriptures. Nowadays there are cartoons based on religious mythological stories that children would enjoy learning from.” Another respondent stated: “By simplifying and explaining scripture in a fun way children would be able to understand better.” It is sad to note that 9.6 % rarely read scripture. As parents our bounden duty is to educate our children in all aspects of their lives. All parents should make attempts to learn their language and encourage their children to study the scriptures.

4.2.5 PERCEPTIONS OF “SAMSKARAS”

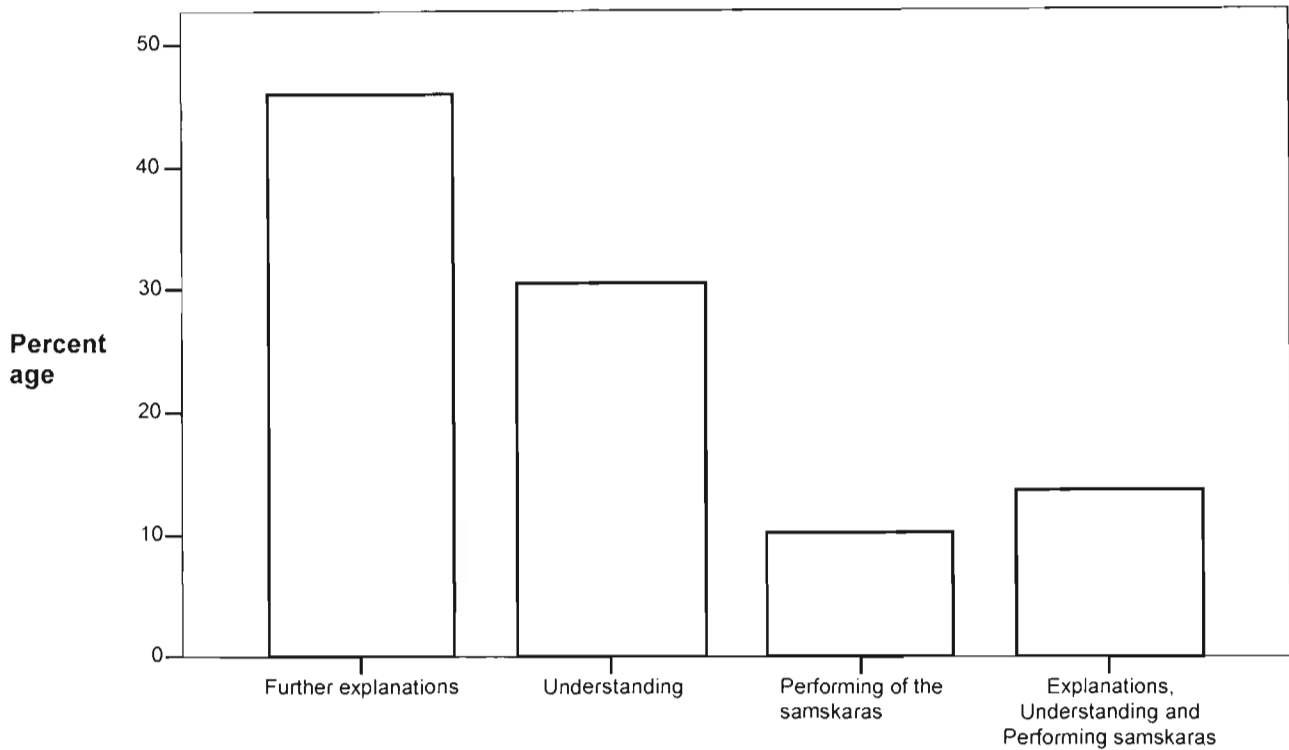
Graph A



Approximately 30% of the respondents understood the samskaras as Ceremonial rituals that helped in developing the individual. Less than 40% felt that samskaras cleansed the mind. Approximately 25% indicated that the sixteen samskaras were performed during the span of their earlier life. 4% of the respondents were not familiar with the term. Approximately 10% of the respondents realized that the samskaras meant detachment of oneself from materialism and concentration on dharma.

4.2.6 NEED FOR REVIVAL OF “SAMSKARAS”

Graph B



Approximately 50% of the respondents felt that the samskaras should be emphasized more and deeper explanations were required. 30% of the respondents needed to understand the significance of the samskaras. About 10% wanted to perform the actual ritual while between 10-20% required further explanation and deeper understanding and they also wanted to perform the samskaras.

4.2.7 THEME: KNOWLEDGE OF SAMSKARAS

From the semi-structured interviews conducted with ten respondents, for the question: “Why has Hinduism developed the samskara system?” the following were the responses:

Respondent 1 — “The samskaras are advocated in the Vedas and must be followed from birth to death.”

Respondent 2 — “It is to discipline one.”

Respondent 3 — “To regulate all our activities and ensure that they are according to scripture and that we do not engage in uncontrolled material pleasures.”

Respondent 4 — “To differentiate between the different types of life.”

Respondent 5 — “To enable us to understand and practise them in our daily lives.”

Respondent 6 — “Samskaras are purificatory and cleansing rituals for upliftment of consciousness.”

Respondent 7 — “To give us a guide in life. Hinduism does not separate spiritual from secular. All life is sacred and if we follow these guidelines we will be free.”

Respondent 8 — “Samskaras were developed for the achievement of the higher ideal of purity of the mind, intellect and soul. The rishis have formulated a system of religious ceremonies known as samskaras. The samskaras are meant to invoke the blessings of God, so that individuals follow the path of righteousness.”

Respondent 9 — “To maintain a sound system/discipline in human life and society.”

Respondent 10 — “The system was designed for the development of human beings — spiritually and materially.”

Mittal and Thursby (2004: 333) state: “Ideally samskaras educate and shape an individual’s moral values in their aim to perfect and sanctify the whole human being.”

Hemant and Cole (1995: 80) state: “Samskaras are rites of passage, comprising of various rituals performed during a person’s life-time. These mark the growth and development of an individual, purify and sanctify the body, enable the soul and refine the personality.”

4.2.8 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CASTE

Table 8

	Percent Yes	Percent No
Do you believe in the caste system?	13.0	87.0
Do you think that the caste system has any relevance in today's society?	16.2	83.8
Would you like your child to follow the caste system?	14.5	85.5
Should a certain caste perform samskaras only?	10.8	89.2
Do you think all people should be allowed to perform samskaras?	85.7	14.3
Do you think that a good understanding of the caste system will help the child develop holistically?	60.9	39.1

Parents overwhelmingly rejected the notion of the caste system and the practice of samskaras along these lines. 87.0% of parents rejected the caste system. It is interesting to note that 85.7% of parents would like to perform the samskaras. However, two out of every three parents believe that their children should know about the caste system.

4.2.9 UNDERSTANDING THE ASHRAMA SYSTEM

Table 9

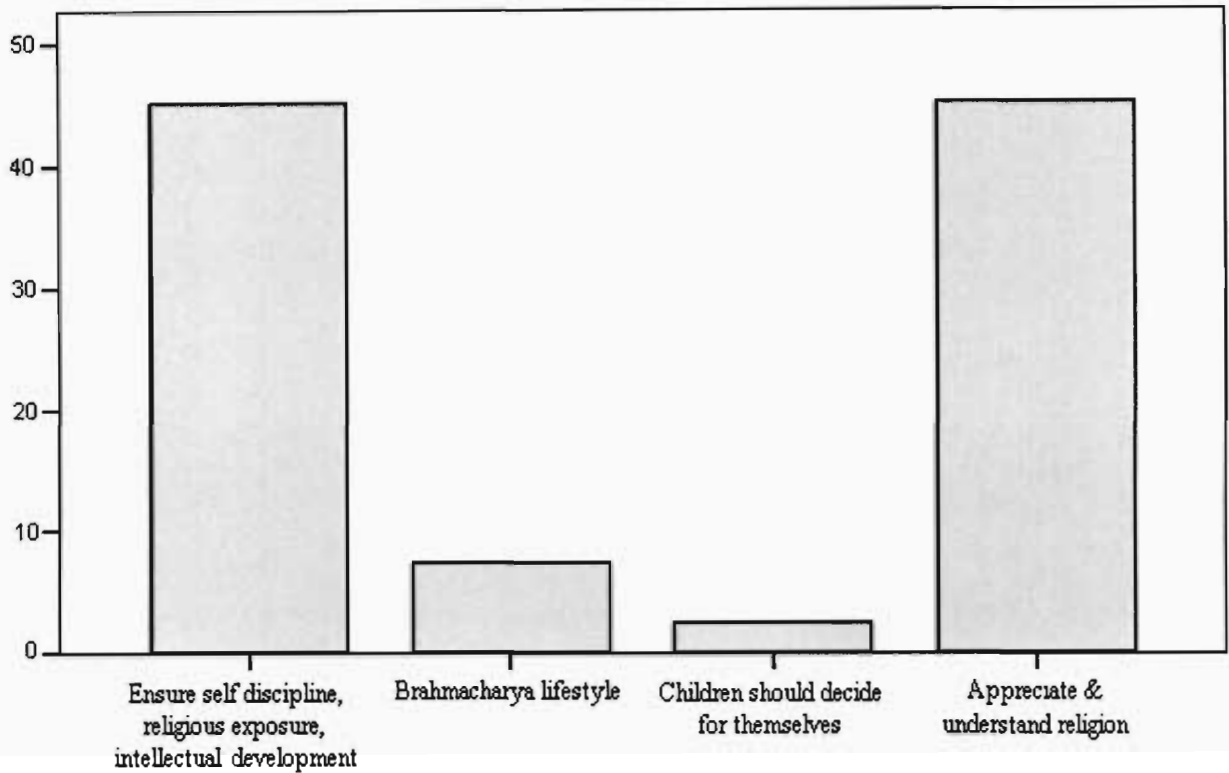
		%
Do you understand the ashrama system?	Yes	69.2
	No	30.8
	Total	100.0

Would you like your children to grow up according to the ashrama dharma?	Yes	71.9
	No	28.1
	Total	100.0

Almost 70% of parents understand the ashrama system and would like to have their children grow up according to it. Parents have the best interests of their children at heart. In order to facilitate this, they agree that a lifestyle that promotes the well being of the child would be beneficial. However, 30.8% do not have an understanding of the ashrama system and therefore would not want to follow it. Hence, most respondents agreed that the ashrama system would be an effective way of promoting their child's development.

4.2.10 REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE ASHRAMA SYSTEM

Graph C



Approximately 45% of the respondents felt that the ashrama system ensures self-discipline, religious exposure and intellectual development. 10% felt that the first stage of the ashrama system would be beneficial. Below 5% of parents indicated that children should decide for themselves. To my understanding it meant that if children wanted to enter grihastha ashrama then it would be their choice. Approximately 50% of the respondents mentioned that if the ashrama system were followed then religion would be appreciated and understood.

4.2.11 VARNASHRAMA DHARMA

“Hindu social theory evolved a unique form of social organisation called Varnashrama Dharma” (Seereeram: 1994: 120) Parents especially must understand the importance of varnashrama dharma. According to Swami Prabhupada, “Unless society accepts the principles of varna and ashrama, it is an animal society. In human society there is understanding of God, not in an animal society” Back to Godhead (Hare Krsna Devi Dasi, July/August 2000: 7). The Varanashrama dharma stratifies society on the basis of merit, competence and suitability, and contributes to the good of society. (Seereeram: 1994: 120). Unfortunately people who are ignorant and not equipped with Vedic knowledge abuse the system. According to the Varanashram dharma that was devised by the Vedic system, the four varnas, or occupational divisions, are Brahman (priest and teachers), ksatriyas (rulers and warriors), vaisyas (farmers and merchants), and sudras (labourers and artisans). The four ashramas, or spiritual orders are brahmacharya, (student), grihastha (house holder), vanaprastha (retired) and sannyasa (renounced). Varnashrama dharma is based on competence and suitability; men fall into four classes, each co-operating with the other for the maintenance, welfare and progress of society. The question of inferiority or superiority does not arise.

In the Visnu Purana (3.8.9) as cited in Back to Godhead (Hare Krsna Devi Dasi, July/August 2000: 30-31) it is said:

varnasramacaravata purusena parah puman
visnur aradhyate pantha nanyat tat-tosa-karanam

Translation: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Visnu, is worshipped by the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of varna and ashrama. There is no other way to satisfy the Supreme Lord.”

The whole aim of human life is to achieve God realisation. A respondent to the questionnaire survey stated that “parents need to understand and gain knowledge from sastra (scripture) so that they could teach this knowledge to their children.”

Bhagavad Gita As It Is (4.13) states:

Catur - varnyam maya srstam guna karma vibhagasah
tasya kartaram api mam viddhy akartaram avyayam

Translation: “According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me.”

Thus the Lord has systematically developed the varnashrama dharma to elevate one to the highest status of life.

In the semi-structured interviews the following responses were received from respondents to the question: What is your version of the caste system?

Respondent 1 — “The Vedas advocate a class system based on ones’ occupation and not based on birth.”

Respondent 2 — “It must always be based on the individual’s deeds and not his birth.”

Respondent 5 — “I do not believe in the caste system, everyone is equal.”

According to Hulmes (1989: 136), “if the Upanishadic teaching about the identification of Brahman and Atman is accepted, no division of caste can be allowed. If the hands quarrel with the stomach or the head, it is not the stomach or head alone that suffers but the entire body including the hands. It is the principle of integration and co-ordination that weighted with the builders of caste.”

Respondent 6 — “It is a scientific system for utilizing one’s abilities in the service of God. Unfortunately it has been misunderstood in modern times, e.g., a doctor’s son is not automatically a doctor. A Brahmin’s son is not automatically a vipra.”

Respondent 7 — “According to Bhagavad Gita and Swami Vivekananda, our natures determine the caste we belong to. One may be born in a Brahmin family, but if one is not truthful, does not pray or study the scriptures, eats meat and leads an undisciplined life, full of lust, greed and anger, then one cannot be called a Brahmin. On the other hand, one may be born a shudra but is truthful and leads a pure life, then he or she is surely a Brahmin.”

Respondent 9 — “The caste system as described in the sastras are still relevant. Unfortunately they are misunderstood and misinterpreted.”

Respondent 10 — “The caste system is basically a social order. Indirectly all social orders follow the caste system. We have teachers (brahmins), soldiers (ksatriyas), farmers (vaishyas) and labourers (sudras). However the caste system got a bad name because the brahmins refused the others the right to ‘migrate’ up the ladder. They become the “fat cats” who enjoyed the luxuries and power and therefore wanted to keep it in the family. Therefore you became a brahmin by birth and remained so even if you did not know the scriptures. This resulted in the degeneration of Hinduism. In Western society a labourer’s child can become a farmer. So indirectly we all practise the caste system but we allow people to evolve into other social orders.”

A general consensus shows that in South Africa people are more class conscious than caste conscious. People place more emphasis on careers. Parents should be guarded about imposing their will on children regarding career choices. The innate potential of the child needs to be first discovered and then developed step by step towards reaching their goal. The child’s natural tendencies and capabilities will allow a child to grow in depth. Brandon Bays (2003: 5) states: “Deep inside all of us is a boundless joy, a potential for true genius, inviting you to discover your own magnificence, which is capable of creating anything.”

Swami Tejomayananda (1999: 19-20) states: “Sometimes if we have failed to achieve something in our life, we want to experience and enjoy that achievement, indirectly through our children.” As parents it is essential that we be careful not to fulfil our selfish dreams and ambition through our children. All children should grow up as shining potentials. In the Ninth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam (9.10.51) commenting on the varnashrama structure in Lord Ramachandra’s ideal kingdom, Srila Prabhupada comments, “Among the four yugas (ages) Satya, Tretha, Dwapara and Kali — Kali Yuga is the worst, but if the process of varnashrama dharma is introduced even in the age of Kali, the situation of Satya-Yuga can be implemented.” He means that the varnashrama, social organization, can satisfy Sri Krishna, because it provides for spiritual advancement of all types of people. He further emphasizes that varna designations should be determined by character, training and work, not by birth (Back to Godhead: July/August 2000: 32). From the response of the respondents, it was clearly indicated that children should develop naturally.

Respondent 1 — “A child must choose a career of his own choice and something which he/she enjoys doing.”

Respondent 4 — “That over-ambitious parents push their children into wrong careers.”

Respondent 9 — “That children should be advised and guided to choose their own career, but with no imposition.”

Respondent 10 — “Parents do push children into career choices which the children may not be interested in. Indian South Africans need to get the status issue out of their head. Some parents feel that if their child is a professional, especially a doctor / engineer / lawyer, then they hold him in high esteem. He may be a crooked useless doctor but he is a doctor.”

The school curriculum is basically very career orientated. According to Swami Sivananda (1990: 10) “Education is not amassing of information, and its purpose is not mere career hunting. It is a means of developing a fully integrated personality.”

Thus if parents are fully knowledgeable on varnashrama dharma and the purpose of human life then many problems will be alleviated and children would grow up developing their personalities according to their potential.

4.2.12 THE FOUR ASHRAMAS

The four social institutions or ashramas have been prescribed for Hindus. They are systematically organized for development of man from one stage to another until the ultimate goal of life is reached. The four stages are: brahmacharya (celibacy), grihastha (house-holder), vanaprastha (stage of detachment) and sannyasa (renunciation).

The Vedic seers formulated the ashrama system for the spiritual development of man. For child development to be progressive in contemporary society parents should emphasise the rules prescribed in the brahmacharya ashrama. The brahmacharya stage is the first stage in the pilgrimage of life, when the student receives proper training in moral and ethical values. Celibacy and self-restraint is the key to success in the brahmacharya stage. “The Hindu approach to a good life begins with a healthy mind and body, as developed in the brahmacharya stage, wherein discipline and duty are inculcated in a person” (Shukla: 2002: 18). Proper training in all facets of life will assist an individual to enter the next stage with confidence and boldness, since the grihastha ashrama is the most important of all stages. The vivaha samskara initiates men and women into householder duties. One of the foremost duties in this stage is procreation.

4.2.13 THEME: MARRIAGE

In the semi-structured interviews, the following questions were asked:

Do you feel that couples should attend intensive training workshops before marriage to really understand the principles of the grihastha ashram and the responsibilities that go with it?

It is essential that couples before stepping into marriage know the significance of this important institution. Bruce (2004: 9) states: “marital relationship is the foundation for healthy parenting.” Swami Chinmayananda (1996: 10) says, “We have to take responsibility for moulding and beautifying the child, prepare him to face the world of tomorrow and to lead and guide the world of the future.” Parenting is a tremendous responsibility. When married couples understand well the responsibilities of parenting before procreation, then rearing children would be much easier and on the path of righteousness. Child abuse, which is an abominable sin, will be eradicated.

Respondent 1 — “This is a very sound idea. If they understand the responsibilities of the grihastha ashram then disharmony and divorce will be a thing of the past. Divorce has a major negative effect on the child. Couples should therefore build their marriage on sound dharmic principles abiding by the laws of the institution.” Through marriage, man and woman assist each other and their children to attain the highest purpose of life.

Respondent 2 — “In this day and age it is very necessary and very important.”

Respondent 5 — “Couples must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of marriage and they must learn to compromise and not try to change their spouse’s beliefs if they do not like them. Swami Sivananda (1981: 12) states: “Marriage is a sacred function which blends or unites two souls to carry out the Divine Will, in their daily lives, and the object of marriage is to attain the four purusharthas, namely virtue, wealth, desired objects and liberation.”

Respondent 9 — “Before marriage couples need not follow workshops or extensive training but should acquire a good understanding of the principles of the grihastha ashram.”

4.2.13.1 ATTENDING WORKSHOPS TO UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF GRIHASHRAMA AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT GO WITH IT

It is essential that our priests have sound knowledge of dharma and explain the marriage principles in a simplified way to young couples. Unfortunately many parents are ill equipped with knowledge of this significant institution and barely practise this in their own lives, so the child who should have been exposed to first hand information via example misses out. From observation many householders did not really understand what this grihastha ashrama really means.

Respondent 1 — “Workshops must be conducted by marriage officers, who are knowledgeable and who should explain the significance of kanyadaan (handing over of the bride to the bridegroom by the bride’s parents), abstention from sinful activities, the tying of the knot and the seven steps.”

Respondent 2 — “Boys and girls do not really know the meaning of marriage which is a union forever. In good days or in bad days married life is for improving humanity. Therefore love, understanding, godliness etc. are its true ingredients.”

Respondent 5 — “Learned people and people who have undergone traumatic experiences are the best teachers.”

Respondent 6 — “Cooking, preaching, etc together will create a stronger bond between them. People are growing further apart because their life styles are devoid of spirituality.”

Respondent 8 — “Parents should know and understand their differences, and live a life of compatibility.” Respondent 10 indicates, “That a family must grow with

the guidance of a guru.” This is a very important point. According to Pundit Munelal Maharaj (2006: 12), “Gurus transmit wisdom to the disciple instilling in him duty, discipline, devotion and dedication as He guides him along the spiritual highway to self-awareness or self-discovery.” If a family has chosen a bona fide guru then in times of difficulties and challenges the guru would be able to guide the disciples on the basis of dharmic principles.

4.2.13.2 MARRIAGE SEEMED TO BE PLAGUED WITH ADULTERY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. WHAT ADVICE CAN MARRIED COUPLES BE GIVEN TO AVOID THESE EMOTIONAL TRAUMAS?

According to Vedalankar (1985: 103), “In order to make man’s life noble and cultured the ideals of dharma have been enunciated, this high development lies in his leading life according to the rules of dharma. Without practising ethical and spiritual virtues he is an animal, not a man.”

Amongst the sixteen sacraments, marriage is the most important, due to the fact that it brings about drastic change in an individual’s life. The mutual union of man and woman is indeed a significant step, which gives security to their children and helps establish virtuous qualities within them. Therefore in order for marriages to be successful, the couple must be well established in dharma. The Hindu scriptures have placed great emphasis on this institution.

Respondent 1 — “Adultery and domestic violence are products of the western way of life. Visiting clubs etc. must be stopped. Proper moral guidance must be given.”

Respondent 2 — “Understanding the meaning and importance of marriage.”

Respondent 3 — “Before marriage i.e. from an early age, a prospective marriage partner needs to be compatible and have good values, not just handsome.”

Respondent 4 — “All couples should have a good understanding of each other and communicate with each other.

Respondent 5 — “Couples must learn to compromise and sit down together to talk about their grievances.”

Respondent 6 - “Couples should increase their spiritual practices and engage in activities together.”

Respondent 8 — “Couples should seek God, respect elders and the young, speak gently. If something is troubling, speak about it. Be honest.”

Respondent 9 — “Married couples need not seek pleasures outside marriage to avoid problems.”

4.2.13.3 WHAT IMPACT DOES PARENTS' BEHAVIOUR HAVE ON CHILDREN?

When there is disharmony between couples, the lives of children are very traumatized. They develop a sense of insecurity, lose concentration and many negative behavioural patterns are displayed. Unfortunately the child gets labelled as a “bad boy or girl”.

Respondent 1 — “The lives of children become badly affected.” They go through mental trauma. Constant quarrel between parents makes their life disorientated.”

Respondent 2 — “The impact on children is devastating. They start hating mankind, blame God, and become atheists, hooligans, drug addicts, a menace to peace and a destructive force in society.”

Respondent 4 — “It depresses children and they may require counselling.”

Respondent 5 — “The children are the ones that get hurt and they sometimes blame themselves for the parent’s behaviour.”

Respondent 6 - “Affects them psychologically and scars them for life.”

Respondent 8 — “That a child who is traumatized by this may harm himself or commit suicide.”

Respondent 10 — “Adultery and domestic violence can have severe psychological effects on the child. Children will grow up hating their parents. They will have fear of getting into a relationship, perform poorly at school and can become rebellious.”

With the Aids pandemic, child abuse, promiscuity and divorce rate accelerating, resolute action is required. Values and principles outlined in the grihastha ashrama need to be explained and inculcated before couples enter this ashrama. Therefore the brahmacharya ashrama plays a pivotal role to foster discipline and self-control. Tulsidas in the Ramayana emphasises monogamy, sexual fidelity and self-control, to assist one to get to the next stage of life, i.e. vanaprastha, easily.

4.14 THEME: CHILD AND SPIRITUALITY

4.14.1 HINDU RITUALS, FASTS AND FESTIVALS OBSERVED BY FAMILY

Table 10

	Family %
Fasts	85.3
Rituals	65.3
Satsang	82.7
Prayers	90.7
Samskaras	53.3
Festivals	86.7

85.3% of families indicated that they observed fasts, 65.3% perform rituals, 82.7% attend satsang, 90.7% perform prayers, samskaras are performed by 53.3%, and 86.7% of the respondents celebrate festivals.

Hindu fasts, festivals and rituals aim to strengthen one on the path of dharma. They add color, pomp and excitement to the Hindu religion. Thus children should be encouraged, by teaching them the significance of the above activities so that they would enthusiastically participate.

4.14.2 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES ENJOYED BY CHILDREN

Table 11

Festivals	69.3
Prayer	50.7
Fasting	18.7
Havan	52.0
Kirtan	42.7
Rituals	17.3

An average of 42% of the respondents did not answer the question as to the manner of their child's religious instruction. This is a clear indication that nearly 50% of children are not being exposed to some form of religious activity. Festivals are observed by 69.3%. While 50.7% engage in prayer, 52.0% performed havan, 42.7% participate in kirtans and 17.3% perform rituals.

The following question was posed to interviewees: Which religious observances does your child enjoy and why?

Respondents 1 — clearly indicated that satsang and bhajans seem to be a popular feature.

Respondent 2 — “Taking part in daily/weekly havan, because it is the most selfless deed a human being can perform”.

Respondent 3 — “All Hindu observances help us to progress spiritually.”

Respondent 4 — “Daily chanting of Hanuman Chalisa every morning. All sit together and chant.”

Respondent 6 — “Singing, chanting and drama bring out their talent.”

Respondent 8 — “Deepavali is a festival the children enjoy. Deepavali, because it is a festival of lights. We pray everyday to abandon evil and embrace the good. Then only can the darkness be removed from us. The family becomes happy, society become prosperous and the nation is peaceful.”

Respondent 9 — “My own children have faith in prayers and satsang. They attend religious discourses”.

4.14.3 PRAYER

Seereeram (1994: 150) states: “Hindu prayer aims at the development of all man’s faculties, bodily, mental and spiritual for not only his own improvement but for that of his fellow men and for the entire creation also. In the Yajur Veda there is a mantra that indicates the true nature of Hindu Prayer.

Om, tejo-si tejo mayi dhehi viryamasi viryam mayi dhehi balamasi balam mayi
dhehi Ojo-si ojo mayi dhehi manyurasi manyum mayi dhehi;
saho-si saho mayidhehi.

Translation: “O Lord! Thou art Light, may I shine in the light of truth; Thou art Infinite Energy may I grow in inner strength; Thou art Supreme Power, may I be possessed of the great power truth; Thou art Inner Awareness, may I ascend inwardly; Thou art Supreme Justice, may I inhere in justice; Thou art Infinite Patience, may I be patient.”

A respondent from the questionnaire survey mentioned that, “It is vital to inculcate the habit of prayer in children since this is the way to connect with the self. Prayer is the most important discipline that a child can imbibe. Prayer helps to strengthen one physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually by yogic discipline for the betterment of one’s self, society and creation as a whole.”

According to the questionnaire distributed only 57% of family members pray daily even though more than 87% of them have a sacred shrine at home. Most Hindus families observe a vegetarian fast at least once a week.

4.14.4 MANY ASPECTS OF GOD INTRODUCED TO A CHILD

From the Hindu point of view the concept of God is the most difficult to define and comprehend. Due to this difficulty the sages of the Rig Veda declared, “Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti” — Reality is one; sages see it in different ways.

The various responses received from the data below indicate ways and means to introduce God to the child.

Respondent 1 — “Stories from the scriptures should be read to them daily.”

Respondent 2 — “Not teaching them about God is illogical, unnatural, and unexplainable.”

Respondent 3 — “Through the various devotional activities—satsang, scriptures, reading etc.”

Respondent 4 — “As a story and as well as audio-visual aids.”

Respondent 5 — “If the parents know about the shastras then they won’t beat around the bush and they will answer the children’s questions correctly.”

Respondent 6 — “Yoga classes, gurukul, meditation, etc.”

Respondent 8 — “By reading the Vedas they will have a true meaning of God.”

Respondent 9 — “By proper teaching and training since childhood.”

Respondent 10 — “By reading through the stories from the scriptures and explaining the different functions of God who is given different names e.g. Creative aspect — Lord Vishnu; Knowledge — Mother Saraswati; Strength — Lord Hanuman. Introducing them in story form will appeal to the child.”

4.14.5 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO ENGAGE IN DAILY PRAYER

First and foremost parents should have a schedule drawn up and this schedule should be followed thoroughly. Parents must teach their children simple mantras with their meaning. Vedalankar (1992: 11) indicates, “The simplest way of knowing and finding God is by praying to Him. We find peace of mind through prayer”.

Respondent 1 — “Parents should teach by example. They should encourage the singing of bhajans etc.”

Respondent 2 — “If parents make it a habit to perform prayers with the family, then for the youngest to the oldest it becomes a routine ritual. Prayers must be understood by all.”

Respondent 8 — “A family that prays together will stay together.”

Respondent 10 — “As a parent we should set an example first. So parents need to engage in regular prayer. Children are impressionable and will follow suit. This will create a firm impression in his/her mind and he/she will carry this impression throughout his/her life. The child should be taught the benefit of prayer. Prayer is food for the soul. Prayer must be adapted to his or her level; by prayer they can get knowledge. Therefore they will do well at school and will be closer to God. Parents need to take their children for satsang.”

It was found from the data that children should be advised to pray daily. According to scripture, the Brahma Muhurta period, which is one and half hours before sunrise, is the most auspicious time of the day and is perfect for spiritual activities. This period is considered the best time for meditation and for spiritual practice, providing a greater effect than any other part of the day. If children are trained to rise early and engage in simple prayers, they will form a habit and grow up with it. Sandhya is also recommended to close the day.

4.14.6 SHOULD A SACRED SHRINE BE CREATED IN HOMES?

A sacred shrine reminds the individual of God's presence. At all cost the shrine should serve as a central point of meeting for family members. The shrine helps the child to focus on and experience God's presence in the home. The atmosphere in the shrine is uplifted with positive vibrations and creates an atmosphere of peace.

Respondent 1 — “A sacred shrine should be created in the home. This will imprint in the minds of all that sanctity is to be strived for”.

Respondent 2 — “It is up to the individual, provided only God is prayed to at the shrine. God is omnipresent and omnipotent. So prayers can be performed without having a shrine.”

Respondent 9 — “God may be remembered anywhere.”

Respondent 10 — “This will give the family some way of identifying with God. A shrine will always remind the person of God”

From the responses it is clear that the shrine allows one to sit for meditation and prayer with some form of direction and concentration. It is difficult to meditate on God as an entity not present. It creates a sense of security that God is present. Children as well as adults need some form of symbol of God. The shrine creates a spiritual atmosphere at home. When a person sees a shrine, divine thoughts enter him. This helps to create harmony at home.

4.14.7 THE VIEWS OF RESPONDENTS ON WHETHER CHILDREN SHOULD BE TAUGHT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS USED IN RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

Hindus centre their life on God and desire to fully immerse their thought in God. Hindu festivals are colourful and have a very deep spiritual meaning. The festivals are significant in many ways. According to Sivananda (1987: 288), they bring people together in friendship and love, and thus old broken relations are forged once more. They help to keep the house clean, because for every festival the whole house is thoroughly cleaned and purified. Hindus observe all these festivals with great pomp, glory, joy and cheerfulness.

The Hindu Religion is full of symbols that have important meanings attached to them. Children need to learn and understand these symbols so that they will understand their spiritual value. All respondents emphatically agreed that children should learn the value of various symbols. The following were the responses:

Respondent 1 — “It would bring their awareness to the significance of doing them regularly.”

Respondent 2 — “Each symbol / ritual must have a valid and logical reason which is constant. There are many which are only traditional, not readily acceptable.”

Respondent 3 — “They should know why they do various rituals. Understanding leads to acceptance.”

Respondent 4 — “Too much of information would confuse them.” Respondent 8 — “When a child recites a mantra, he will know the meaning and significance of a particular ritual, and also know the significance of the festival and why it is important.”

Respondent 10 — “Prayer becomes meaningful and purposeful. He will also do the prayer with proper bhava (emotion). He will be able to stand up to the critics of religious symbols and therefore not be converted or swayed.”

“Mahatma Gandhiji was an outstanding example of the great power of prayer. It was prayer and the constant chanting of the all-powerful Rama Nam that sustained him in all his struggles” (Swami Sivananda: 1987: 379). Regular prayer will therefore help the child in attaining life’s goals.

4.14.8 SATSANG

Hinduism places great emphasis on satsang. Prayer and satsang together help us make spiritual advancement. In the Ramayana, Tulsidas clearly states:

Binu satasanga bibeka na hoie, Raama kripa binu sulabha na soie,
satsanga muda mangala moolaa,soi phala sidhi saba saadhana phoolaa

Translation: Wisdom doesn’t dawn without association with saints, and such association cannot be possible without the grace of Sri Rama. Contact with noble souls is the root of joy and blessings; it constitutes the very fruit and fulfilment of all endeavours, whereas all other practices are blossoms, as it were. (Balakand 2:4)

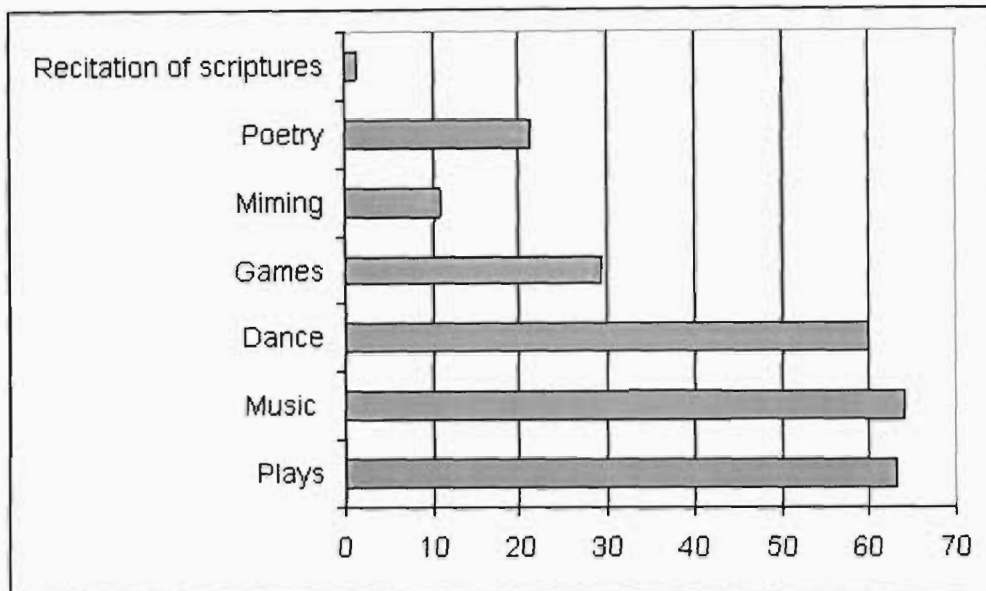
Swami Sivananda (1987: 369) states: “A moment in the company of a holy saint can grant one the benefit of many years of sadhana.” Satsang in the company of devout people strengthens spirituality.

From the analysis of the data to the question of the importance of satsang, it was found that children should be encouraged to attend satsang at an organisation on a regular basis. Every evening the family should gather for prayer and bhajans. In a household, prayer and satsang should be made an integral part of daily life.

The questionnaire survey revealed that only one in three children attended satsang. Of these, one in three did not look forward to attending satsang. Some of the reasons were as follows: “Not appealing, uninteresting, too long, cannot understand.”

4.14.8.1 SUITABILITY TO ATTEND SATSANG

Graph D



Approximately 60-70% of respondents enjoy the physical activities such as plays, music and dance. 30% were keen to engage in games that taught spiritual values. Miming was preferred by 10%, 20% enjoyed poetry pertaining to spirituality, and below 5% were keen on recitation of scripture. It is noted that little emphasis is placed on scripture, due to children being unable to understand the text and the complex language. The data revealed that it is vital to properly engage children in satsang. Activities at their level of understanding should be planned. This point was clearly noted from the semi-structured interviews. The respondents stated their views on whether special activities should be created for children at satsang to learn at their levels.

All ten respondents answered with an emphatic “yes.” Some of the responses were as follows:

Respondent 1 — “Special activities at satsang make it exciting and interesting for children. Children listening to high language and topics that pertain to adults find it very boring and incomprehensible.”

Respondent 5 — “We must make it more interesting for children so that they can enjoy satsang.”

Thus activities especially designed for children will greatly assist them in getting a better insight into the Hindu Dharma. From my observation the Divine Life Society, Ramakrishna Centre and the Hare Krishna Movement have planned activities concurrently for adults and children. These programmes greatly assist parents and children to develop simultaneously.

4.14.8.2 WHEN ASKED ABOUT RESISTANCE TO SATSANG, IT WAS FOUND THAT:

Satsang should be encouraged in a loving way, and children need to know the value and significance of that satsang.

Respondent 1 — “It is important to teach them that satsang will make them better persons.”

Respondent 2 — “They have not attended satsang regularly since childhood or they have not been properly taught the importance of satsang or they do not understand what is preached at the satsang.”

Respondent 3 — “Focus on the positive aspects of the satsang. The enthusiasm of parents rubs off onto the children.”

Respondent 4 — “The benefits of satsang should be explained to them and how it impacts on their everyday life.”

Respondent 5 — “Sitting with them and experiencing the importance of satsang in their daily lives.”

Respondent 6 — “If resistance is present on a long term basis I would make it more pleasurable, like getting their friends to come along and making it a fun activity.”

Respondent 9 — “Children resist satsang because of lack of conviction and faith. They should be trained positively since early childhood.”

Respondent 10 — “Children should be advised on the benefits of satsang. Satsang is food for the soul: just as body needs food — the soul needs spiritual food.”

The data suggests that going to satsang is like having a bank account where one deposits weekly. If you need money in time of need then you can withdraw this money which you have banked. If you have not saved the money then there will be no money to withdraw. In the same way, attending satsang is like banking and

when you are in difficulty then God will help you to overcome them since you will have a spiritual bank balance. The knowledge gained at satsang will help one to face the challenges of life. Children need to be deprived of luxuries and grounded if they do not attend. There is a need for a degree of discipline to be instilled in our children.

4.14.8.3 IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION:

HAVE YOU FOUND A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE OF BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS AMONG CHILDREN WHO ATTEND SATSANG TO THOSE THAT DO NOT?

All respondents mentioned that they have found significant changes with children who attend satsang.

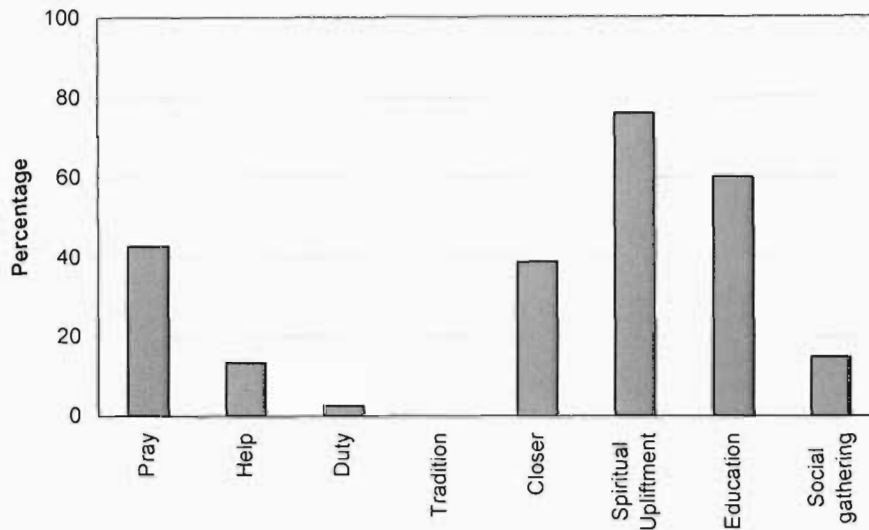
Respondent 2 — “Those who attend satsang respect human values more readily. They argue less and listen more. They are more peaceful and understanding. They know their purpose in life”.

Respondent 5 — “Children who attend satsang are more respectful and obedient.”

Respondent 9 — “Those who attend satsang have a better understanding of life, and are more respectful to elders.”

4.14.8.4 REASONS FOR ATTENDING SATSANG

Graph E



An overwhelming 80% attended satsang for spiritual upliftment, 60 % to obtain some education on spiritually related topics, and 40% engaged in praying at satsang. Approximately 40% attended satsang to bring them closer to God. Below 20% attended satsang as a social gathering to gain some help and approximately 1% attended out of duty. From the analysis it should be noted that people attend satsang for various reasons. On the questionnaire two respondents made interesting comments.

Respondent 1 — “Satsang purifies the heart and develops one step by step on the path of spirituality.”

Respondent 2 — “The robber Ratnakar became the great saint, by the association of Narada Muni. This is the power of satsang and company of saints.”

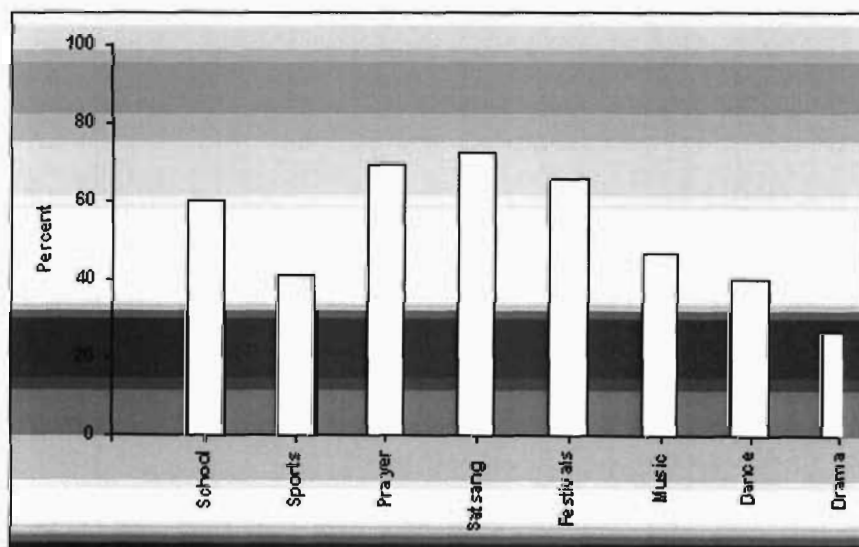
4.14.8.5 SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATED AT SATSANG

It is imperative that the various religious institutions and satsangs disseminate knowledge that is practical and would assist an individual to progress on the path of spiritual realization. Institutions should assess the needs of their congregation and discuss knowledge that would be appropriate to assist them in accordance with time, place and circumstances. All respondents, from questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews agreed that information on samskaras, purusharthas and varnashrama dharma should be disseminated at the satsang.

4.15 THEME: HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

4.15.1 ACTIVITIES FOR THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

Graph F



90% of the respondents believe that children should be given an all round education: moral, intellectual and physical. 80% of the parents feel that the school system is not adequate in addressing the holistic development of the child. They believe that some form of religious instruction was necessary. Swami Sivananda (1990: 30) reinforces this point by stating, “People have to live in this

world; for that secular education is necessary. There is something greater than material knowledge. Together with the textbooks they should also study sacred scriptures. To know the soul, religious education is essential. The most urgent need today is to introduce into our schools and colleges progressive religious education.” Almost all parents agreed that learning the mother tongue would help in understanding their culture.

Interesting answers were retrieved from the semi-structured interviews on the holistic development of the child. The question was as follows:

4.15.2 HOW CAN WE CREATE A BALANCED LIFE FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF THE CHILD?

In the Bhagavad Gita As It Is (12.18-19) Sri Krishna clearly outlines how one should bring about equilibrium in life:

Samah satrau ca mitre ca...bhaktiman me priyo narah.

Translation: One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, such a person is very dear to me.”

It was found that if parents understand this instruction and live their lives as examples by portraying these qualities then, children would find it easy to imbibe these qualities. Sai Baba states: “Children learn a great deal by observing and copying their parents. Thus it makes it imperative for parents to plant the right ideals in the minds of their children, by the example of their own conduct.” (Bruce: 2004: 6).

Respondent 1 — “A balanced life for the upliftment of the child means to see to their social, moral and spiritual development based on the principles of our scriptures.”

Respondent 2 — “All children on the globe must follow a global code of conduct / behaviour, which must be inducted in the school curriculum.”

Respondent 3 — “By simplifying and explaining to children in a fun way, so that they can understand and we get their attention.”

Respondents 4 — “We as parents need to lead a balanced life. The rest will fit into place.”

Respondent 5 — “We must live in a pious way so that the child can learn from the example.”

Swami Sivananda (1981: 48) states: “A mother renders incalculable service to the nation and to the national culture by bringing up the children on healthy and sound lines”.

Respondent 6 — “Stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Srimad Bhagavat Purana are excellent examples of scriptures that demonstrate how the individual can develop holistically.”

Respondent 7 — “The spiritual values of life are greatly lacking in modern education. At the point of conception the foetus is conscious of emotion. Therefore the samskaras, purusharthas, and varnashrama dharma, if properly implemented, will create a balanced lifestyle. The Gurukula system provided education in all facets of life. The Guru transmits information from sastras that makes an earnest effort to assist the child to internalize these values and norms and become an adult in accordance with the demands of the Hindu way of life.”

Respondent 8 — “Inculcate good values in a child.”

Respondent 9 — “Teach children from a young age about the value of discipline. Empower them to select good TV programmes, keep good company, play outdoor games, eat healthy food, study or do their school homework meticulously, read good books to increase their vocabulary, speak well and write well, help with household chores and pray regularly.” Swami Sivananda (1990: 13) points out that “Education is training in the Art of Living. It should refine and elevate the mind”.

Respondent 10 — “Educate parent and child on how to lead an ethical moral life.

The child needs to be educated to fend for himself by being taught a vocation e.g. lawyer, bricklayer. He / she needs to be educated in spiritual values, importance of attending satsang etc. Physical exercise has been greatly emphasized by sages and saints; that is why we have yoga asanas. Children should be taught to play some musical instrument. Children should be given some responsibilities overseen by parents. The above will help the child develop holistically and open up all his faculties. In the present era too much time is spent on training for material wealth. Parents should ensure their children's growth takes place holistically and their lives are balanced. Parents should firstly lead a balanced life.”

It was gleaned from the data that many children are fortunate to have almost anything they ask for. We must teach them to be selfless by taking them to places like children's homes for the handicapped etc, where they can give to the poor and less privileged and learn to serve them selflessly. Thus they will appreciate what they have rather than demand for more and more. They don't have to get everything they ask for. They must learn to accept 'no' for an answer. As a child develops it is essential that there is balance brought into all aspects of life.

Hindu dharma is holistic; it takes into account all aspects of an individual's development. Following the teachings of the scriptures can lead one to the holistic development of an individual. According to the teachings of the Vedas, Hindus are educated from the womb to the tomb.

Some very pertinent issues on parenting were explored through the semi-structured interviews. The questions and answers will shed light on the integral development of the child.

4.16 THEME: PARENTING AND RELIGION

4.16.1 FUNDAMENTAL GUIDELINES THAT HINDUISM OFFERS TO PARENTS IN REARING CHILDREN

Hinduism has offered guidelines in child rearing from conception. The Vedas are believed to be the most esteemed, authentic and sacred books of the Hindus. Hindus regard them as repositories of divine knowledge and the origin of Sanathan Dharma. They are the main source of all Hindu literature. Vedas prescribe the samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma to achieve the ultimate goal of life, which is moksha. The knowledge that is described in the Vedas is for the holistic development of the individual. If followed correctly, all stress and anxiety will diminish.

Respondent 1 — “The guidelines in the Vedas are that we must question ourselves as to why there is suffering in life etc. What is the law of karma? What is the relationship between God and the soul?”

Respondent 2 — “Good code of conduct and behaviour must be instilled in children. Spirituality with materialism.”

Respondent 3 — “Very early development 0-5 years with love, 5-18 strict moral codes, firm period of discipline, 18 years treat as an adult i.e. respect, sense control, etc.”

Respondent 4 — “emphasize fundamental guidelines, truth and honesty at all times, respect for others and a belief that a family that prays together stays together.”

Respondent 5 — “There should always be respect for elders, faith and reverence to parents”.

Respondent 6 — “Cultivating spiritual habits, like regular prayer etc, focus on cleanliness, tolerance and discipline.”

Respondent 7 — “The eternal stories of child saints teach us how one should bring up children. Stories like Bhakta Prahlad, Dhruva, Naciketa, Sri Rama and

His brothers, Sri Krishna and many other stories show the importance of prayer, truthfulness, heroism, fearlessness, strong moral and ethical values and strength of character.”

Respondent 8 — “One is advised to study other scriptures under a spiritual master to learn about the real nature of God.”

Respondent 9 — “Daily prayers, obedience and brahmacharya teach one to live according to the four ashramas.”

Respondent 10 — “Hinduism believes in an extended family system which unfortunately is fast disappearing. The extended family system allows the child to grow up with grandparents who are generally retired. They learn values from grandparents e.g. in the form of stories, visiting temple/ prayer.”

4.16.2 MODERN PARENTS’ RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES IN DEVELOPING THEIR CHILDREN IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR LIFE

Elite respondents were requested to comment on modern parenting skills.

It is imperative that parents understand the enormous task they have undertaken when they conceive a child. Hinduism from the point of conception has chalked out a plan for the development of the foetus into a healthy baby. Unfortunately in modern times parents take rearing children for granted. The teaching of the Vedas is intended to sensitise parents or would be parents on the ordained role of each partner. Deep preparation is required to assume responsibility of a new life. It is of paramount importance that if we wish to build up a sane, harmonious and loving society, the children must be reared with proper principles. Swami Paramananda (2002: 11) states: “Parents are instruments through which a soul comes to this university of life.”

Respondent 1 — “Total ignorance is the cause of this parental neglect.”

Respondent 6 — “People have placed more emphasis on material progress. Some

area has to suffer as a result. It is not surprising that infants now spend hours in after-care institutions and sometimes rarely spend more than an hour with their parents. Thus neglect turns them to drugs and other vices.”

Respondent 7 — “Parents have a major role to play in bringing up children. They sadly think that by giving expensive presents to children, they express their love for them.”

Respondent 7 (Head of Sarada Devi Ashram, Pravrajika Ishtaprana) made the following points:

- Even before the child is born, parents must practise daily prayer, devotion to God, purity of heart and mind and above all strength of character. The expecting mother should listen to the chanting of mantras, bhajans, kirtans and devotional music.
- Both parents must respect each other; the mother must be happy within herself. Avoid quarrels, especially using vulgar language. Fill the heart and mind with good wholesome thoughts of love, peace and prayer.
- These samskaras will help the child be good, pure and strong. Moreover, children must be taken to satsangs regularly. They must be exposed to our rich culture and eternal values.
- Sri Ramakrishna says: “A young plant has to be hedged around, otherwise animals will trample on it. When the plant has grown into a big tree, not only will wild animals not be able to destroy it, but also it will be able to give shade to others. Also, only a young plant can be bent around and made to grow in the desired direction. Once it becomes a tree, it cannot be bent.” Similarly, only when children are young can they be moulded to have a good character. Once they are over ten or twelve years old it is very difficult to train them.

- Nowadays, books like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, and many other scriptures are available for children. Parents must read these to the children and impress upon them the need to learn the values of truthfulness, no smoking and drinking of alcohol. Explain to them the harm that these cause.

Respondent 8 — “Parents need to instill love and care in the child. When the parents come home after a day’s work they must talk to the child. For example, how was your day? What activities did you do today? Did you complete your homework, etc.? Thereafter, while one is preparing the meals the other should be doing activities with the child, or in the kitchen both can be with the child, having meals together, praying together and doing things together when the child is still young. It will help the child to feel cared for. In the past like the 1960’s both parents worked, but there was order. The only difference is that there are more material things like cell phones, computers and television today to distract children.”

Respondent 9 — “That is the penalty parents are paying for not abiding by the instructions of the scriptures.”

Respondent 10 — “In Kaliyuga money will be given priority. Although material progress is necessary, Hinduism does not neglect this aspect; material progress should go equally with spiritual progress.”

It is observed from the data that to finance one’s high standard of living both parents have to work and as a result the child is neglected. To add to the above problem, we do not have the extended family system, which has resulted in children either being left alone at home, or left with the domestic worker. Children are therefore not under adult supervision and get up to mischief e.g. truant school. At home they get together with friends and indulge in drugs, alcohol and sex. They are also exposed to television, which is the evil of the 20th

century. Television allows the negative forces to enter the home. They expose the child freely to drugs, scenes of violence and sex.

They are free to watch this as parents are not at home or the parents use television as a baby sitter. This material progress is related to desires which will eventually consume us. People need to get back to their roots as Swami Sivananda (1990: 2) says, “Simple Living, High Thinking.”

We need money and material comfort but we also need to make spirituality part of our life. With spirituality we will be able to instill eternal and moral values in our children.

Due to pursuits of materialism, the family as a unit does not have time to pray together, sit and talk together or eat together. Parents are too busy at work and when they come home, the mother has to prepare meals and attend to other chores. There is no time for the child’s emotional, psychological and spiritual support. Although the parents provide all the material needs the above is lacking. Hence the child becomes depressed, suicidal, or takes drugs. The child cannot communicate with parents because they are too busy. Therefore, we as parents need to devote more attention to our children.

4.16.3 ROLE MODELS

In response to the question of parents as role models, all respondents feel that it is essential that parents set ideal examples for their children to follow. The scriptures emphatically emphasize this point. According to Vedalankar (1985: 105), “God has implanted the desire for self propagation in all living things in the universe.” Marriage ensures continuity of the family life and so the birth of children constitutes a successful married life.

Respondent 1 — “Every parent should acquaint themselves with the requirements laid down in scriptures, follow them and set an example to their children.”

Respondent 2 — “By teaching them basic values before they go to school, by demanding that government apply the teaching of the scriptures, to ascertain continuity at all levels until they are adults.”

Respondent 3 — “The parent is supposed to be revered by children. Therefore they must live according to scripture to deserve this.” Respondent 4 — “You have to lead by example.”

Respondent 5 — “The Ramayan teaches us about brotherly love and obedience of Rama.”

Respondent 6 — “Parents should follow a regulated spiritual program. Example is better than precept.”

Respondent 7 — “Parents must practise what they preach. They cannot smoke or use bad language in the presence of their children and expect them not to imitate their bad habits. Children are excellent imitators and they love to do what adults do, so parents have to be careful how they nurture their young ones. Children must be guided /taught to have good role models, e.g. Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sri Hanumanji, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Sarada Devi of the modern era.”

Respondent 9 — “Parents should not only teach their children but live in an exemplary way for their children to learn and follow.”

4.16.4 RELEVANCE OF SCRIPTURES IN THE MODERN TIMES TO DEVELOP THE CHILD HOLISTICALLY

The responses to the above question were overwhelmingly in the positive. All ten respondents felt that the samskaras are very relevant to develop the child holistically.

Respondent 2 — “Although the teachings are very relevant, it is difficult to adapt in the modern times.”

Respondent 7 — “This knowledge has to be adapted / updated and given a new turn to suit our needs. Therefore God takes birth age after age to guide us according to our needs.”

Respondent 5 — “It is relevant because a child can be easily influenced by negativity. The negativity that can plague a child’s life is mind-boggling. They are easily exposed to drugs, abuse, child pornography etc.”

An article titled “ Child Protection is Everyone’s Business” (The Express: 30 May 2006) states: “Feedback from various welfare departments in Chatsworth indicate that not only is there an alarming increase in child abuse, but that the community is not adequately meeting its responsibilities to protect its children from sexual exploitation, drug abuse, violence and involvement in criminal activities.”

Respondent 9 — “The teachings are for all times, there is no better system for the holistic development of the child. Hindu scriptures have solutions to all these problems mentioned, provided man follows and adapts himself to their teachings.”

Respondent 7 — further states, “We are experiencing all these problems mainly because we are not following the teachings.” Hinduism has chalked out a plan that must be followed to achieve the highest goal of life.

From the data it was observed that children are easily gliding down to a demonic life by drug taking, prostitution and alcoholism. Hinduism has therefore charted a plan that must be followed to achieve the highest goal of life. By practicing the sacraments, pure thoughts are created in the child’s mind, right from conception.

In this way the earthly existence of the child would be purposeful and fruitful. As Respondent 8 mentions, “for the achievement of the higher ideal of purity of the mind, intellect and soul, the Rishis have formulated a system of religious ceremony known as samskaras. The samskaras are meant to invoke the blessing of God, so that the individual follows the path of righteousness.”

4.16.5 ADAPTATIONS OF SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS IN MODERN TIMES

The samskaras have been created to give direction to the child’s life at the very crucial development stage. When the rites and rituals that are prescribed for each samskara are understood, explained and performed in an appropriate way, they become relevant and valuable to the individual’s growth. In response to the question: To what extent can the teachings be adapted and utilized in the modern times:

Respondents 1,4,5,6,7,8,9 and 10 share the view that the teachings of the samskaras can be explained in a simplified and logical way so that they can be adapted and used in modern times to the fullest extent because they are like stepping stones to future growth.

However Respondents 2 and 3 believe it is dangerous to modernize the teachings until people’s attitude and mentality are changed. The teachings should be explained in a simple and logical way so that people understand the importance of an organized and disciplined life. Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (6.35) clarifies the above statement:

“O mighty armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment.”

Thus if samskaras are performed as originally intended to shape the individual’s personality and assist in his spiritual growth, then although we are living in modern times, our life can be regulated and moral strength can be gained.

Therefore it is essential that parents equip themselves well with this profound knowledge so that they may prepare their children step by step through the journey of life, until the final goal is reached.

4.16.6 HINDU SCRIPTURES CHALK OUT A PLAN OF ACTION TO ELIMINATE FAMILY PROBLEMS

100% of the respondents indicated a definite yes to the question: Do you think the Hindu scriptures chalk out a plan of action to eliminate the problems that families are experiencing today, e.g. child abuse, domestic violence and alcoholism?

However they substantiated their answers by stating that the teachings are not practised by people who ignore the scriptures and act according to their own whims and fancies. It is noticeable that most Hindus overlook most samskaras. Only a few samskaras are performed. There seems to be a lack of knowledge on this significant topic as indicated by the data. The priests do not highlight the importance of many of the samskaras. Religious reformers, teachers, preachers and priest have to play a motivational role to ensure that the observance of the samskaras is revived.

Thus by practicing the principles of dharma one can lead a righteous life and finally attain spiritual perfection. The four objectives (purusharthas) of life explain clearly the process to achieve liberation.

4.16.7 PURUSHARTHAS

Purusharthas have four categories: dharma (religious duties), artha (material prosperity), karma (satisfaction of desires) and moksha (salvation). The scriptures proclaim that all aspirations of man are found in these four purusharthas. Hinduism guides one in the fulfillment of legitimate desires and towards

liberation (moksha). They have been placed in this order and reflect a program for gradual development of the individual. According to (Seereeram (1994: 106), “Dharma is duty, obligation, law, order, righteousness. Without dharma society cannot exist.” The knowledge of dharma is learned in the brahmacharya stage (student life). Having acquired knowledge of dharma, an individual pursues the acquisition of artha, which refers to wealth in all its varied forms. However wealth must be accrued through legitimate means. The third objective is karma (satisfaction of the senses). Karma is satisfaction of the senses in a controlled manner. The ultimate goal is moksha or freedom from rebirth. “With detachment comes the discovery of the inner self, eternal peace and infinite bliss” (Maharaj: 2006: 222).

From the beginning of life man must understand the purpose of this human birth. Parents at every step must inculcate in their children the purpose of human life on earth. In accordance with Hindu dharma the aim of life is liberation from bondage, leading to God realisation. According to Vedalankar (1998: 62), “To fulfill this aim, the Hindu religion points to the four objectives necessary in life and how they can be achieved.” Respondents were asked the following question: Purusharthas are the four aims and objectives of man’s life. How can this concept be practically implemented in the child’s upbringing? The responses were as follows:

Respondent 1 — “Dharma, right conduct must be firmly instilled in their minds. Parents must live a righteous life first and then children will emulate them.”

Respondent 2 — “The parents must know the aims first. Then the child can be taught from the moment he is born.” Vedalankar (1985: 105) states that “the aim in marriage is to seek the continuity of family lineage.”

Respondent 3 — “There is time and place for everything. In everyday life children must be taught this e.g. the time for sleeping or playing football. They must be disciplined.”

Respondent 4 — “If you practise the four aims correctly, it will influence a child’s life ideally.”

Respondent 5 — “The purusharthas should be instilled in a child’s upbringing from an early age.”

Respondent 7 — “We cannot follow the purusharthas to the letter but the spirit or essence of the purusharthas can be followed.”

Respondent 9 makes an important point by stating that “the four purusharthas have to be clearly defined for the child’s understanding before expecting him to implement them in his life. Parents should know them and live them.”

Respondent 10 — “Parents have to lead and teach children by example. Firstly they should know what the Hindu scriptures laid down for parents to follow. So they need to attend a satsang, follow a guru, or join an institution, which teaches values. There are many institutions that teach ethical human values, e.g. Ramakrishna, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Hare Krishna Movement and the Divine Life Society. I think they need to choose a guru and imbibe the rules of dharmic life.”

4.16.8 ARTHA AND KARMA

According to Hemant & Cole (1995: P168), “artha (wealth), karma (pleasure), are very important. These are important commodities for life but it should be kept in check and not allowed to dominate life.” Marahaj (2006: 222) states that “artha or acquisition of wealth must be attained through dharmic means. Wealth must be utilized as an expression of thanks to the Lord who blessed you with the capacity to earn it.” Karma means desire. Man’s goal must be to control his senses and overcome the multiplicity of desires so that eventually only one desire remains the desire to attain moksha.

All respondents emphatically agreed that artha and karma are given dominance in these modern times. Hindus are moving away from their culture. Some of the responses were as follows:

Respondent 1 — “Artha and Karma have become primary objectives of people in modern times because they have lost sense of their spirituality.”

Respondent 6 — “People believe it will make them happy... but their lives become artificial in the process.”

Respondent 7 — “Artha and karma are easily available, from which one apparently gets enjoyment and fulfillment immediately. However, very few people worry about the eternal consequences or the long-term peace that one needs. People go for temporary enjoyment and happiness, which ultimately makes them miserable. The fleeting things of the world cannot give us eternal happiness. Artha and karma truly dominate modern living because one has the tendency to neglect the teachings of Hindu scriptures. Dharma seems to have no place in today’s life which makes moksha unattainable.”

Respondent 10 — concurs with the Bhagavad Gita by stating that “all attachments and dependencies result from desire. Desires have consumed our very soul, e.g. Ravana (in the Ramayana) portrays through his character how artha and karma consumed him and led to his destruction. We need to use the worldly objects that God has given us to get to him, and not to get entangled in them. The reason for this degradation is a western education system, devoid of spiritual lessons, which teaches us only to earn a living and accumulate wealth for old age.

It is an accepted fact that the cause of mental and physical illness is stress of modern day living ie accumulating wealth and enjoying sensual pleasure. What we need is spiritual education together with our formal school education.”

Comments by the respondents reflect the realities of today. Parents immersed in

the accumulation of wealth have very little time to spend toward their children's welfare. Often parents are working and children are left in the care of crèches or nannies having no knowledge of spiritual education. Thus having too many desires to acquire wealth becomes detrimental to proper values being instilled in children. People are always complaining that they have "no time." If parents make time and were equipped with the basics of child development and parenting skills then our children would be directed to lead a balanced life.

4.17 THEME: HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE

Interviews were conducted on the healthy lifestyle of a child with specific reference to diet from the Hindu point of view, which, if followed properly, will ensure an ideal healthy lifestyle for a child. The questions and responses follow:

According to P D Soni (1994: 95), "It is believed that a person is what he eats. The child must learn that eating habits contribute to a better understanding of himself with regards to physical and psychological independence and self discipline."

An individual's health depends on his diet. In present times a large number of diseases are known to be diet related. A balanced vegetarian diet has all the nutrients required for the mental and physical development of the child. According to Acharya Siddhayogananda Avadhuta (1999: 91) "By human anatomy, physiology, functionally and structurally, we are vegetarian. We haven't got such types of secretions, teeth and intestines that carnivores have to utilize a flesh diet." These points favour a vegetarian diet.

Respondent 1 — "Vegetarian diet is recommended in the scriptures."

Respondent 2 — "It is well known that a vegetarian diet is healthiest."

In the Bhagavad Gita (17.8-10) three types of food are mentioned i.e. sathvic (food in the mode of goodness); rajasic (food in the mode of passion) and tamasic (in the mode of darkness / ignorance). For the healthy development of the child the sattvic diet is recommended. Respondent 3 to respondent 8 favour a sattvic diet.

Respondent 10 — “The sathvic diet has a calming effect on the child. This diet contains dairy products, nuts, vegetables, and fruits.”

It is gleaned from the data that a sathvic diet has a calming effect on the mind. Therefore one will have a calm and intelligent child. A child who has a predominantly rajasic diet which comprises spicy foods, meat, onion and garlic will have a hyperactive child. A tamasic diet, which is made up of rotten, preserved and stale foods will lead to a lazy dull child. If people follow the Bhagavad Gita’s instructions on diet, there will be fewer diseases.

4.17.1 HOW DOES THE CHILD’S DIET HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE CHILD?

Swami Paramananda (2004: 17) states: “What we eat makes up each cell of our body which is propelled by the mental motor. The body influences the mind and vice-versa.” Thus what we eat should help us to advance spiritually. Swami Sivananda (1990: 436) reiterates this point: “Diet has a close connection with the mind. The mind is formed of the subtlest essence of food.”

Respondent 1 — “That tamasic diets will make them more violent and a sattvic diet will make them more controlled and sober.”

Respondent 2 — “Give the child a healthy diet, he will grow physically and mentally healthy. If the physical side is poor the mind is not at rest. Parents should train their children to follow a balanced diet and at all times emphasize a high standard of health, vigor and vitality.”

Respondent 4 — “Sathvic food will result in sathvic behavior and a cool and calm mind. Animal foods will have the opposite effect.”

Respondent 5 — “By following a sathvic diet the child can have a balanced life style.”

Respondent 6 — “Meat eating produces a violent and aggressive mentality. Vegetarians appear to be more sathvic.”

Respondent 8 — “The practice of good eating is very helpful in the matter of sense control. Without sense control anything can happen.”

Respondent 9 — “A proper diet for children is positive for their mind.”

Most Hindus follow a vegetarian diet during fasting periods, festivals, functions and auspicious occasions, embracing a healthy lifestyle. For a child to be a refined human being, he must constantly focus his attention on the sathvic (good) way of life and gradually abandon the rajasic (passionate) and the tamasic (dark) way. This training will assist children to evolve to greater levels. Dr Roy (1994: 65) states: “It offers humankind a way of perfect health, vitality and well-being without harmful side effects.” Ayurveda, if followed from an early age, will prevent illness and create a balance within as well as in nature. Parents should adopt the ayurvedic life-style to assist in the development of the child.

4.17.2 YOGA

4.17.2.1 WILL DOING YOGA ASANAS IMPACT ON THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD? IF SO, EXPLAIN?

Acharya Siddhayogananda Avadhuta (1999: 12-13) states: “Yoga asanas are a kind of exercises which keep the body healthy and many diseases are cured.” The effects of yoga asanas on the body as emphasized by Acharya Siddhayogananda Avadhuta are as follows:

- Increase vital energy through deep breathing;
- Balance glandular secretions;
- Restore emotional harmony;

- Loosen stiff joints and tone up muscles;
- Prevent and cures diseases;
- Keep the spine flexible and strong;
- Remove stress and relax body and mind.

The word yoga means ‘to join’. Yoga teaches us the method of joining the individual soul and universal soul. Swami Sivannanda (1983: 3) says: “Asanas (yoga postures) are a system of exercise to make all parts of the body strong and healthy.” Vedalankar (1998: 68) is of the view that there are many kinds of asanas to assist the different parts of the body in its growth and development as well as to keep the body disease free. These asanas will assist in the health and happiness of the child. Thus children should know the benefits of each asana and practice them daily for full benefits. Respondents that were interviewed made the following points on yoga.

Respondent 1 — “The asanas are scientific and are known to strengthen different parts of the body.”

Respondent 2 — “Yoga disciplines the body and mind. A disciplined mind does not stray. A disciplined body does not harbor illness. Yoga therefore creates a healthy mind in a healthy body and a disciplined mind in a disciplined body.”

Respondent 3 — “It results in greater mobility and muscle strength.”

Respondent 6 — “It has been proven that yoga makes happier and more balanced people.”

Respondent 8 — “The performance of the yoga system is the aim to control the senses. When you take up the task of disciplining and training the mind then you will be positive and can lead a peaceful life.”

Respondent 9 — “Yoga is intended for the physical development of the human being. Practice of yoga since childhood is very positive for the healthy life of a child.”

Respondent 10 — “Children should be taught to do yoga asanas daily with other physical exercises.”

The next section represents the perceptions of practising priests.

4.18 PRACTISING PRIEST

4.18.1 SAMSKARAS PERFORMED BY PRIEST — TABLE BELOW INDICATES THE SAMSKARAS COMMONLY PERFORMED BY PRACTISING PRIESTS.

Table 12

Respondents	Samskaras performed by practicing priests
1	Karnavedha, vivaha, upanayana, vanaprastha, simantonnayana, vedarambha, samavartana, antyesti.
2	Namakarana, vivaha, chudakarma, antyesti.
3	Garbhadhana, namakarna, punsavana, simantonnayana, jatakarma, chudakarma, antyesti, vivaha
4	Namakaran, vivaha, upanayanna, antyesti
5	Namakaran, vivaha, vedarambha, jatakarma, chudakarma, antyesti
6	Vivaha, antyesti
7	Namakaran, antyesti
8	Vivaha, antyesti

The common samskaras that were performed by the priest were namakarna, upanayana, vivaha and antyesti. The uncommon ones were karnavedha, simantonnayana, vedarambha, samavartana, pumsavana, chudakarma, and jatakarma. The unique ones performed are garbhadhana, vanaprastha and sannyasa.

4.18.2 IMPORTANCE AND REVIVAL OF SAMSKARAS

When asked about their opinion on the importance and revival of the samskaras, the following were the responses from priests:

Respondent 1 — “Samskara is the purifying process of the soul and the body. Just as gold in its raw state mined from earth is useless until it goes through the process of purification and crafted into jewelry, similiarly the soul is purified by the samskaras.”

Respondent 2 — “To purify body mind, intellect and soul.”

Respondent 3 — “It helps a person go in the right direction.”

Respondent 4 — “Moulds one’s life in Dharma.”

Respondent 6 — “Samskaras help to uplift one’s mind towards the scriptures.”

Respondent 7 — “For benefit of the child and community.”

Respondent 8 — “To understand the change of stages in life.”

Respondent 9 — “Samskaras purify the impressions from previous births.”

Respondent 10 — “For attainment of God.”

The data analysis indicates that priests regard samskaras to be very important to uphold dharma, to purify the body, mind and intellect and to instill moral values.

As gleaned from the responses to the above question, all respondents felt that samskaras should be revived for various reasons. The Vedic teachings have been designed for all ages and all times. In order to attain the four aims of life, a step-by-step process is promoted in the Hindu sastras.

4.18.3 INFLUENCES OF THE SAMSKARAS ON VALUES

The following were the comments by practicing priests on the influence of the samskaras to instill values in children:

Respondent 1 — “Children are taught purity, discipline and respect. They are also taught celibacy, which helps tremendously to broaden their thought process in education and sense control.”

Respondent 2 — “It gives children moral upliftment and instills qualities of devotion towards God.”

Respondent 3 — “Helps them learn about their religion.”

Respondent 4 — “At every step the child will be taught caring and sharing.”

Respondent 5 — “Qualities need to be instilled in the child every step of the way. By performing these samskaras the child will understand his / her journey.”

Respondent 8 — “Instills faith in God.”

Respondent 9 — “It helps to purify the mind.”

Respondent 10 — “The samskaras help one commit to one’s religion.”

The respondents positively pointed out that the samskaras are instrumental in the cultivation of moral and ethnic values. As pointed out by Ayer (1987: 22), “Just as gold or diamond that is dug out from the ore needs refining in order to shine in all its splendour, man too needs these samskaras or purificatory ceremonies in order to shine in his best form physically, psychically and spiritually.”

4.18.4 DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE BY PRACTISING PRIESTS ON THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES: SAMSKARAS, VARNASHRAMA DHARMA AND PURUSHARTHAS

Respondent 1 — “At satsang if conducted on a regular basis. While you perform kathas, pujas at peoples’ homes, wedding ceremonies etc.”

Respondent 2 — “Do workshops regularly on various topics of significance to community.”

Respondent 3 — “During festivals and celebrations because of larger crowds.”

Respondent 4 — “On a daily basis at satsang.”

Respondent 5 — “Determines what topics need to be inculcated.”

Respondent 6 — “Writing articles and distributing to different Hindu organizations”

Respondent 7 — “By discourses on the above related topics.”

Respondent 8 — “Satsang.”

Respondent 9 — “Doing kathas.”

Respondent 10 - “During religious festivals.”

The responses suggest specific ways and means by which priests can disseminate knowledge. The priest can play an integral role in propagating the teachings of samskaras at various events that they attend. They can constantly influence their audience by emphasizing the significance of the rituals and the importance of the samskaras in an individual’s life. Pamphlets could be distributed so that people would keep this as a means of reference.

4.18.5 DO YOU FEEL THAT BEFORE PERFORMING THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCREATION AND PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE CEREMONY, SHOULD BE EXPLAINED TO THE COUPLE.

In response to the above questions, the practising priests made the following comments.

Respondent 1 — “Most definitely. To be a real grihastha they must be trained to have a sense of responsibility, to feel concern about the children that they bring into the world.”

Respondent 2 — “Definitely. The best way to learn values is if they see it live. Therefore parents must be outstanding role models so they could teach their children the moral and ethical values.”

Respondent 3 — “Yes, this would decrease divorces.”

Respondent 4 — “Adultery has plagued our society and marriages, and maybe with proper training these problems would decrease.”

Respondent 5 — “Yes, couples before stepping into the marriage institution should be educated with responsibility and accountability that makes up this institution.”

Respondent 6 — “Couples may not be able to cope on their own.”

All the respondents were very clear that there was a need for pre-counselling forums before entering the grihastha ashrama. They felt that such guidance would help alleviate the maladies that plague society today, namely divorce and infidelity.

4.18.6 COUNSELLING IN THE GRIHASTHA ASHRAM

The following were the responses to the question: As a priest, do you think a counselling service should be set up for couples experiencing difficulty in grihastha ashrama:

Respondent 2 — “Yes, an institution should be formed to train people in the householder life.”

Respondent 3 — “Yes, people should be well trained in the scriptures and an organization formed to handle marital issues.”

Respondent 4 — “Yes, this would aid people and may be the divorce rate will decrease. Divorces have a negative effect on children.”

Respondent 5 — “This will assist. People won’t easily change their religion. Hinduism may gain more support.”

Respondent 6 — “Because many couples experience difficulties on various levels support from religious institutions become necessary.”

Respondent 7 — “The South African Hindu Maha Sabha should look at forming an organization that would assist the Hindu community.”

Respondent 8 — “It is a necessity to address difficulties.”

Respondent 9 — “Yes, it is important to prevent divorces.”

Respondent 10 — “Yes, children suffer deeply when couples experience marital problems.”

Most of the respondents acknowledged that a counselling system would help stabilize the marriage institution when there is internal turmoil and conflict. There appears to be unanimous agreement with regard to a bona-fide counselling service being implemented.

4.19 SINGLE PARENT

Saunders and Myers (1994: 4) state: “For many people, relationships make a huge difference to the quality of their lives, sharing experiences with other people can add to their own enjoyment of them.”

A good, healthy married life is the foundation for healthy parenting. Questions arise as to why relationships break up? Relationships end for many reasons, such as death, infidelity, incompatibility, physical and emotional abuse. Many individuals with children end up being single parents. Single parents face many challenges bringing up children. Children are traumatized by break up in relationships. This section will focus on the challenges facing single parents and the coping skills required. A semi- structured interview was conducted with five single parents who were divorced.

Responses from single parents yielded the following.

4.19.1 HAS DIVORCE /SEPARATION OR DEATH HAD AN IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD?

Respondent 1 — “Yes, she was more withdrawn and sometimes blamed herself but I have explained to her that it is not her fault.”

Respondent 2 — “Yes, the child’s interaction with the father has been reduced and the disadvantage is that the child has to cope with the emotional imbalances. The impact of such a negative event in the life of the child will only be seen in the child’s later life. There is no doubt in my mind that the child would have felt more emotionally stable had the father been present.”

Respondent 3 — “Yes definitely, my child is faced with an abnormal situation since the values her mom and I hold are different.”

Respondent 4 — “Yes, my children displayed defiant behaviour patterns. They become rebellious. Arguing was rife among siblings.”

Respondent 5 — “Yes, mood swings. Children lacked concentration at school. They could not accept change easily and always hope that mom and dad would get back together again.”

Amos (1997: 14) observes that “Children whose parents are divorcing are often moody and bad tempered. Some find it hard to concentrate at school. They are often full of fears. They feel no one cares. It is a difficult time for parents. They are experiencing emotional turmoil in their lives and sometimes find it difficult to give their children the best attention.”

Edwards (2003: 18) states: “Children somehow feel that they are to blame for their parents splitting up and they feel guilty. Parents divorcing or separating brings about an emotional upheaval in children. It is as if their whole world is shaken.”

Bays (2003: 136) states that “a child will internalize his/her anger and express it as defiance, delinquency and anti-social behavior.” Parents must be able to demonstrate to the child how to handle challenges in life and teach them emotional independence.

The overall response to the above question showed that divorce does affect the mental health of the child among other things. Therefore couples should take the grihastha ashrama seriously and they ought to diligently implement the regulations of the ashrama.

Children who come from dysfunctional families internalize their hurt and subsequently their feelings can get transmuted into behavior that is angry, withdrawn, hostile, hurtful or even self-destructive. Unfortunately there is no

institution that can provide one with a manual to handle loss, separation or divorce. Yet if the principles of dharma are followed and practised by individuals these traumatic situations can be avoided.

4.19.2 TEACHINGS FROM HINDUISM THAT HELP SINGLE PARENTS

Single parents share their opinion on the teachings of Hinduism that help them cope with their situation.

The following were their responses:

Respondent 1 — “Let go of the past, and learn from the past. I felt I must forgive, for me to move on.”

Respondent 2 — “The chanting of the holy names of Krishna has given me the strength to cope with this malady. In the Garuda Purana it is said, ‘If one chants the holy name of the Lord, even in a helpless condition or without desiring to do so, all the reactions of his sinful life depart, just as when a lion roars, all the small animals flee in fear. Other activities that helped me are as follows:

- Worshipping the deity — is a very potent method to evolve to the transcendental platform.
- Prayer — by reciting prayers of great souls one imbibes some of the bhakti. I found the prayers of Prahlad and Gajendra, the elephant to be helpful. Visiting holy places — cleanses my consciousness and allows me to focus with more clarity on the scriptures.
- Association with advanced souls — by dint of their purity, I have gathered more strength to study the scriptures.
- Preaching in formal contexts — to professional or university students. By repeating what I have studied, it helps me to consolidate my realizations.”

Respondent 3 — “I study the scriptures and engage in devotional service which has provided me with the greatest solace. By complete surrender to the Lord one will automatically gain his mercy and following dharmic principles becomes easy. This assurance from scriptures assists one to repent and move forward.”

The Bhagavad-Gita As It Is (18.66) states:

sarva dharman parityajya mamekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva papebhyo moksaisyami ma suchah

Translation: “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.”

Respondent 4 — “I participated in yoga and meditation as well as served organizations such as Aryan Benevolent Home and youth organizations, and this helped me in my times of difficulty.”

Respondent 5 — “To be self aware of my emotions and deal with them using different therapies. Becoming very self aware of my words, thoughts and actions. It is important for single parents to get themselves emotionally sound so that they would be good role models for their children.”

Most of the respondents found that the tenets of the Hindu scriptures helped them deal with the crises arising from divorce. Many of them indicated that it gave them the spiritual strength and fortitude to progress in life.

4.19.3 SINGLE PARENTS AND THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

Single parents play a vital role to ensure the holistic development of the child. They have to plan activities to ensure that the child will benefit in a holistic way. However single parents have many challenges to face, and the teachings of scriptures help them to cope with difficult situations.

The following responses indicate some of the activities single parents engage in to ensure the holistic development of the child:

Respondent 1 — “Teaching her about religion and the importance of following our culture. I also send my child for religious studies.”

Respondent 2 — “Yes, positive input and training can still be given to help them imbibe the spirit of religion. I have found narrating stories from the scriptures and helping them to find the morals behind them quite uplifting for them. Also encouraging them to participate in drama and dance for the pleasure of the Lord.”

Respondent 3 — “I involve my daughter in academic, extra-curricular and spiritual activities. I facilitate and promote my daughter’s interest in all these activities.”

Respondent 4 — “I engage my children in youth camps and sport, as well as satsang.”

Respondent 5 — “It is vital that parents engage their children in activities that interest their child. I encourage my children with spiritual and cultural activities, music, dance, karate and religious studies. As parents, it is important to be 100% engaged in your child’s life especially children that are undergoing emotional difficulties who need to feel loved and nurtured.”

The respondents focused on the strength that comes from engaging the children in holistic activities for their benefit. Moreover, in the process, parents felt that it helps them to develop an intimate bond with the children, which further fosters emotional nourishment and well-being between them.

4.19.4 DO YOU FEEL THAT IF YOU AND YOUR PARTNER WERE WELL EQUIPPED WITH KNOWLEDGE, THE DIVORCE COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

The above question yielded the following responses from single parents:

Respondent 1 — “Yes, my husband would have understood the importance of marriage vows and would not have broken them.”

Respondent 2 — “It could help, although one must not overlook the fact that one’s karma has a role to play in the final destinies we attain. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna says one must act according to the qualities he has acquired from material nature and what can repression accomplish? So knowledge can point one in the right direction but ultimately it is one’s own choice that determines one’s future path.”

Respondent 3 — “I feel I was equipped with information on grihastha ashrama but my ex-wife felt such standards too traditional and preferred a more western model and that caused a strain. Thus my being well equipped actually produced an opposite effect – rather than helping avoid a divorce, it caused one.”

Respondent 4 — “Yes, proper training in this aspect would have been beneficial. My ex-husband did not seem to understand the point of equality and compatibility. He wanted it his way only. He was very controlling and manipulating. If I did not conform to rigid rules then I was asked to leave.”

Respondent 5 — “Although we had knowledge the negative qualities of greed and lust dominated. Therefore having the knowledge is one thing, implementing it is another. Infidelity was dominant and thus divorce unavoidable.”

Most of the respondents felt that knowledge itself could not ultimately count as the decisive factor. Although it could lend support to a stable situation, there were other factors that contributed to the divorce. The synthesis between the western and eastern paradigms was also needed to create harmony in the grihastha ashrama, given the high exposure of western ideals in society today.

4.19.5 REASONS FOR DIVORCE

There were several reasons for divorce; these ranged from infidelity to incompatibility. The respondents indicated the specific reasons for undergoing divorce.

Respondent 1 — “Infidelity. After years of physical abuse and mental anguish divorce was the only option.”

Respondent 2 — “A shift from religious practices in a regular way. Invariably this leads to placing more demands on economic development and moving in separate directions. We had less time for each other and we ultimately created isolated shells of estrangement.”

Respondent 3 — “Incompatibility on spiritual grounds and lifestyle, values and morality. Because my ex-wife asked for it, I felt that it was reason enough to let it be... to divorce.”

Respondent 4 — “Abuse, unreasonable behaviour, like alcohol, verbal, emotional and physical abuse.”

Respondent 5 — “Infidelity, abuse – physical, mental and emotional. I was treated like a doormat, given no respect and taken for granted. Did not respect marriage vows. Hypocritical behavioral patterns. Selfishness displayed to the highest degree.”

The respondents gave various reasons for divorce, ranging from infidelity to physical and emotional abuse. Most of the points mentioned by the respondents pointed to moral degradation as the foundation of the malady.

CONCLUSION

Powel (1998: 5) defines families as follows: “Families aren’t about people living together. They are about people living and caring for each other.” Covey (1997: 216) states, “Creating a warm caring supportive encouraging environment is probably the most important thing you can do for your family.” However, the reality is that circumstances prevail which make family units dysfunctional. This impacts on each member of the family. The children especially, are left to make choices that are very difficult. They suffer deep emotional trauma. When divorce

or separation takes place the child's sense of security and well-being is threatened and he/she displays defiant behavioural patterns. However difficult the situation with single parents may be, they must realize and learn to get together and set an example of how to effectively handle challenges that face them. Sai Baba (2004: 42) teaches, "The primary responsibility of a parent is to mould the character of the child." Therefore although people may be single parents, they should still raise their children in a way where they follow dharmic principles. Thus it becomes imperative for every parent to understand the Vedic knowledge and implement it in their lives. This should be regarded as their highest duty.

The findings underline the need for holistic development of human beings, through imbibing and practising the values of the samskaras and the varnashrama dharma. The vital nurturing that is missed in early life manifests as divorce, broken families and traumatized children later.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS / CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In presenting the final chapter, general themes / insights have emerged which are discussed as significant to the central hypothesis of the study, namely, the use of samskaras, purusharthas, and varnashrama dharma in child development.

The chapter begins with the discussion of the role of parents as a central theme and ideas of marriage; good company; single parents; television; yoga and diet; prayer and various viewpoints of personalities on child development as well as the data. Finally, the recommendation borrows from Chopra's 'The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success for Parents' (1997).

The integral development of the child is extremely relevant in the age of Kaliyuga. The symptoms of this age are domestic disruption, disharmony, crime and untruth. Therefore the role of parents needs to be significant in the life of a child in order to protect and nurture them towards spirituality. Parents need to equip themselves with knowledge from Hindu scriptures to assist them in the upbringing of their children in a holistic way. A state of 'emergency' can be declared regarding the abuse, violence, rape, molestation, suicide and socio-economic problems that our children are currently experiencing. It is observed that our children are exposed to the degradation of morals in modern times. If this situation is not addressed, then all signs point to utter chaos. Hence the research was undertaken to re-evaluate ways and means to implement the lofty Vedic teachings that are enshrined in our scriptures for the proper development of children.

It is essential to examine the extensive knowledge that the Hindu scriptures present on samskaras, purusharthas, and varnashrama dharma as a guide to parents for skills required for the development of the child.

As deduced from the data, the samskaras, purusharthas and varnashrama dharma provide a comprehensive and systematic approach for the progressive development of man. It is critical for parents to understand the above principles so that they can carry out their duties in a responsible and accountable manner.

As reflected in the data the blueprint for successful parenting is to lead by example. If we note carefully when children speak, they very often imitate the thoughts, words and behavioural patterns of their parents. It is therefore important that the thoughts, words and deeds are consistent at all times.

The data reveals that revival and practice of the samskaras, purusharthas and varnashrama dharma would bring out changes in the character and development of the child.

It is vital that priests, religious reformers, swamis and gurus of different Hindu organizations examine ways and means of propagating this important knowledge to address the ills of society. This knowledge should be disseminated at every opportunity e.g. weddings, satsangs, festivals and funerals.

The South African Hindu Sabha should prioritize the social ills of society and campaign against evil tendencies using the knowledge of the Hindu sastras. The Sabha should equip the heads of religious organizations and other interested people with knowledge to fight this ignorant behaviour. It is alarming to note how parents who should be caregivers and nurturers are destroying their children's lives by sexual molestation, violence, neglect etc. Therefore it is

imperative that religious organizations make it their mission to take some kind of drastic action to eradicate these problems.

A critical issue emerging from the data and from my own experience of being an educator as well as a single parent is that spending quality time with children should not be compromised. Parental involvement in all aspects of the child's life is integral for healthy growth. In an article from "The Rising Sun" entitled: 'Parenting in difficult times' (July 4-10 2006), Mr Gordon Govender, PRO of the South African Principals' Association, Chatsworth states: "Schools can only succeed if parents get involved actively in partnerships with the school so that every learner is given the opportunity to give off their best at all times. Children are our most valued investment in life and as such should be nurtured to their full potential."

Promoting self-esteem in a child is an important responsibility of the parent. A child's future life is based on self-esteem. Sandy Van Vuuren in her article: Soul Talk (Mecury 27, September 2006: 13) makes the following important points on self-esteem: "Self-esteem is a vital factor in determining the heights which our children will reach physically, academically, professionally and in their relationships. But most importantly, when parents show their authentic appreciation for the people their children are, then there is undoubtedly a benefit that accrues to them in regards to their self-esteem."

Parents should promote a balanced lifestyle. Prayer, meditation, yoga and a healthy diet, followed in a disciplined way would assist to create a healthy lifestyle.

A suggested guide to a daily programme for children has been designed after observation and informal discussions with religious leaders, parents, and educators as follows:

- Arise early by 6:00 am
- Have a bath or wash
- Begin the day with prayer — 2 to 5 minutes
- Have a healthy breakfast
- Go to school
- Return from school and play/ eat/ relax for +/- one hour
- Do homework or read good books +/- one hour
- Watch only educational television programmes
- At 6:00pm pray regularly. +/- 15 minutes (sing devotional songs, read a verse from the Gita or any scripture/ holy book; do japa; learn the art of meditation (begin with 2 min and gradually increase it to 5 min); family should try to pray together, especially in the evenings or at least once a week.)
- Weekly extracurricular activities e.g. learn Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil or Telugu. Learn to play musical instruments, e.g. harmonium, tabla, sitar and vina. Learn classical dancing or any art. These help discipline the children and increase their concentration levels.
- Weekly playing of outdoors sports — swimming, tennis, nature trails etc. Our children need to enjoy and appreciate nature's beauty.
- Attend weekly satsangs at any religious venue.
- Perform selfless activities like feeding the poor or contributing towards it.
- Have a healthy light supper.
- Children should go to bed early so that they can rise early.
- Be in the habit of reading a few lines from a holy book or recite a prayer.
- TV and computer games should be restricted to a minimum.

Attending satsang and praying together would ensure the inculcation of religious values. Parents should be equipped with knowledge of religious symbols, rites, customs and traditions so that they could explain them to their children. All parents can achieve a harmonious and enriching family life, provided they act as exemplary role models. Children whose parents portray this in their lifestyle can easily cultivate human values. Parents should follow a practical programme to suit their lifestyle.

The dharmic principles that are enshrined in our scriptures are spiritual methods to teach human values to our children.

Sai Baba (2004: 2) states: “Parents must feel that they are servants appointed by the Lord to tend to the little souls that are born in their household. Just as the gardener tends to the trees in the garden of the master, similarly parents have the primary responsibilities to mould the character of their children.”

High ideals and values cannot be taught from books only; they have to be role-modelled by parents. Angajan, at a lecture at a youth camp (June 2005), made a valid comment.

“Parents need to set an example, instead of constantly sermonizing to the children.”

This is because example is better than precept. The law is that children learn what they live with. Bhagavad Gita As It Is (3.21) points out that:

“Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow and whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.”

Parents are natural leaders of innocent children. Therefore they must be familiar with the teachings governing moral and ethical codes of conduct and practise them daily in their lives.

5.2 ROLE OF PARENTS

Swami Sivananda in his booklet — “Bringing Up Spiritual Darlings” (undated: 3-4) made the following interesting points on the integral role of the parents.

- “Children are very good imitators. They easily detect flaws in their parents, and their trust in them begins to wane.”
- “Parents should be well disciplined; practise living by strict moral values and ethical codes and should not compromise principles and values.”
- Parents should emphasize to their children the importance of prayer and the power of the Divine Name. This will develop faith and devotion in God and difficulties will be overcome easily. During difficult times, prayer and repetition of the Divine Name should be intensified.
- Parents should practise noble values so that children will learn through example and easily follow them in their lives.
- Virtues can be taught to children through the medium of stories from the scriptures ie the Mahabharata, Ramayana and Srimad Bhagavatam. Nowadays children will enjoy watching the cartoons on DVD’s and on computers based on stories from our scriptures.
- Parents should be aware that their children live in a time of moral degradation. The media portrays violence, promiscuity, murder and rape on a large scale and children are exposed to this regularly. This social disturbance and psychological imbalance, together with a decline in the practice of positive

values and rise in crime, is very destructive to the developing psyche of children. Unhealthy mental impressions developed during childhood leaves scars that will be carried over to the next birth.

- Parents should avoid bringing their work related difficulties home and getting frustrated with their children
- “Parents need to spend quality time at home with their children. This quality time should involve positive, free and sincere interaction with all members of the family.”
- Responsible shared parenting is necessary at home, especially where both parents work. The father, too, must take responsibility together with the mother for helping their children in all aspects of development.
- “Parents must ensure that the diet of their children is free from too much sugar and spices as these make the mind restless and increase tension” (Swami Sivananda: Bringing Up Spiritual Darlings, undated: 3-4).

The data emphatically revealed that parents should be exemplary role models in all aspects of their lives; i.e. living up to strict moral and ethical codes, prayer, meditation, yoga and diet, quality time and teamwork. These aspects must feature in their lives for them to be good role models. The data emphasized the importance of discipline and the cultivation of good religious principles namely, prayer and chanting the holy names of God. The need for introducing a sattvic diet to control the mind was mentioned. A healthy mind is the basis for spiritual development and an uncontrolled mind leads to conflict. Hence Swami Sivananda emphasizes of the need for a wholesome diet.

5.3 MARRIAGE

Burns (2004:146) states: “A quality of marriage is perhaps the optimum factor for rearing secure children. It is often said that the best thing that you can do for your child is to love your spouse”. Today we find that this important institution is taken for granted. Domestic violence and abuse of all forms are present in a marriage. These types of behaviours affect the upbringing of the child. Before entering the grihastha ashrama (householder life) people must understand this stage properly. The responsibilities and accountability that go with parenting must be clearly understood. It appears that nowadays marriage is a contract and when sensual pleasures are satisfied with one partner then spouses conveniently make excuses and commit adultery. The principles of grihastha ashrama have been discussed in chapter 2. Bruce (2004: 14) further states: “Marriage is a spiritual laboratory that provides us with the opportunity to sacrifice our desires and to give to another.” Marriage is based on trust, love, and commitment. It takes a great deal of work to maintain these principles. To be good parents these qualities need to be portrayed for the benefit of the child. A strong marriage brings much stability and security to the child. Therefore it becomes pivotal that couples understand from the Vedic teachings the principles by which the grihastha ashrama is governed, and more importantly the integral role that they will play. These above mentioned points have been investigated and the data emphasizes their importance.

5.4 SINGLE PARENTS

The researcher discovered that all single parents found it difficult to cope with the upbringing of their children. This is obvious, since this role requires both father and mother to be present in the child’s life. Single parents who are plagued with emotional difficulties find it difficult to meet the demanding needs of the child. It is therefore imperative that satsangs and spiritual institutions disseminate knowledge on the social evils of society and also assist single parents cope with

their challenges by setting up counselling sessions with parents and children. These institutions could set up sponsorships or raise funds for single parents who are having financial difficulties. The priests that are appointed at temples should regularly disseminate knowledge on the principles governing the grihastha ashrama.

Various temples should engage in joint and regular campaigns to make people aware of the social evils of society and advise ways and means that these problems can be eradicated. The Hindu scriptures have the solution to all the social evils. Man needs to take cognizance of this knowledge and implement it in their daily lives. The next pertinent aspect that parents must be aware of is the company the children keep.

5.5 GOOD COMPANY

Hindu scriptures place stress on the company of truth. Parents should monitor the company of their children and inculcate in them values that will help them discriminate between good and evil.

It is essential at all times to keep the company of truthful people and grow positively to serve society. Children should be encouraged to join spiritual camps run by various organizations to help inculcate ethical values. Some of the organizations that have programmes to suit the needs of children are: The Divine Life Society which has monthly yoga camps, The Ramakrishna Centre, Hare Krishna, Chinmaya mission, and the Sai Baba Ashram. These institutions have weekly programmes that disseminate knowledge on human values. Parents should make a concerted effort to encourage their children to attend these programmes. As Angajan (2002: 5) aptly points out: “In the Vedantic scriptures, satsang (good company) are emphasized as a very important discipline in life. In positive assembly there is a power created which, in the congregation, erects a powerful fortress against the magic of the world around.”

Saints and sages of time immemorial have always emphasized the company of truth because the mind has a tendency to imitate the things that you associate with.

Parents should teach their children the power to discriminate between good and evil and to always choose to be in positive company. Television can be regarded as bad company.

5.6 TELEVISION

“Parenting is a very difficult task. Television, Internet, video games, computers, and cellphones add to the complexity of parenting. The atomic bomb created a fear of destroying the world. However television, movies and internet in their ultra-sophisticated style are depriving our home of morality” Bruce (2004: 161).

The negative effects of television pollute young minds. Children become restless and tired after watching too much of television. As an educator the researcher has observed that children who watch excessive violent movies lack concentration and imitate the violent scenes in their behaviour. “Watching television has been characterized as multi-level sensory deprivation that may be stunting the growth of our children’s brain.” Brain size has shown to decrease by 20-30% (Poplawski: 1998) as cited in (Bruce: 2004: 174).

However with all the disadvantages attributed to this modern technology it has been proven useful to teach the Hindu scriptures. Many thousands of Hindus have benefited from Ramanand Sagar’s production of the Ramayana and subsequently the production of “Krishna”. Children benefit by watching religious programmes from the Hindu scriptures produced in cartoon form. The stories teach moral values through this medium.

The family together as a unit should watch these religious movies and stimulating discussions should take place between them. Thus this unique technology can be used in a beneficial way if monitored by parents.

The data agrees with the evil effects of using television if not monitored by parents. Many programmes portray scenes of immorality, namely, rape, abuse, promiscuity, hijacking and robberies. These undesirable programmes are screened in the early evening, and if parents are negligent children could be watching these programmes, leading to detrimental effects on their impressionable minds. Parents should know the content of the programmes and if possible should spend quality time watching educational programmes with their children.

5.7 YOGA / HEALTHY EATING HABITS

Proper diet and yoga have a positive effect on the mind of the child. Hinduism propagates a vegetarian diet because it is beneficial for the spiritual aspirant. Hindus generally set aside days of the week when they abstain from eating meat. Among Hindi-speaking people, Tuesday seems to be a common day on which people abstain from meat eating. However many have adopted the vegetarian life style for a myriad of reasons, ranging from health, ethics and spirituality. Hinduism regards all life as sacred. Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (9.26) confirms:

“If one offers me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I will accept it.”

All offerings made to the Lord become prasadam (mercy of the Lord). If children are taught to offer their food, they will purify their lives and show gratitude to the creator for providing so generously.

Health is our greatest wealth. Without good health and strength, we cannot enjoy life. Therefore a vegetarian diet would be a recommendation to develop the child physically. Hatha Yoga is a physical practice of asanas (yoga postures) to create free flow of energy throughout the body. Regular practice of Hatha yoga develops positive mental attitudes, reduces stress and seeks freedom from the cycle of birth and death (Prabha Visnu Das: 2004: 64).

Parents should always bear in mind that purity of food leads to purity of mind. A vegetarian diet is conducive for spiritual advancement. A daily routine schedule should be drawn up and followed regularly to advance on the path of spirituality. Prayer and meditation play a vital role in the life of a child.

The data points out the importance of yoga and healthy eating habits for the holistic development of the child. Therefore parents must be aware of all aspects of the child's development, since these aspects are essential for the healthy growth of the child.

5.8 PRAYER

Daily prayer at home in the morning and evening should form the most important routine of both parents and children. A time set aside that is common to all members of the family to pray together in the morning and evening is essential. It brings about family unity. Children should be taught the power of prayer. Challenges in their lives could easily be overcome by regular prayer and meditation. As Swami Sivananda (1990: 62-63) states:

“Prayer can move mountains. Just as food is indispensable for the body, prayer is indispensable for the soul.”

As gleaned from the data, prayer is an essential feature of religion and thus it should be observed as part of the daily routine. Further, prayer is the prescription for the soul that brings about nourishment of the entire being. Parents should teach their children simple prayers that they will be able to understand and follow easily. The key to success in praying is that prayer should be done with deep love and devotion to God.

Chopra (1997: 21) states: “Our responsibility as parents is to place our children firmly on the journey of spirit. This is the best thing we can do to ensure their success in life, better than giving them money, a secure home or even love and affection.”

Parents need to learn to connect to the boundless potential within, in order to teach their children the nature of spirit. Therefore Hindu dharma has prescribed a development process from birth. At each stage, man is guided to deepen and get in touch with the spirit. The samskaras, purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma that have been discussed in (chapter 2) give an individual assistance to reach the ultimate goal.

5.9 RESPONSE FROM ANGAJAN: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Angajan made the following very pertinent points at a youth camp in June 2005 (Wagensdrift Nature Reserve, Estcourt).

- Hinduism has divinized every aspect of human life from birth to death, from pleasure to pain, from enjoyment to hard efforts, from opulence to frugality. In Hinduism child development starts not after they are born, but well before they are even conceived by the mother.

- Hinduism has a scientific system set out for child development. The Vedas have four sections. The first sections of the Vedas are exclusively designed for the youth (brahmachari) stage. Therein innumerable hymns and verses are found for the healthy development of the human mind. The second to fourth sections are designed for the householder (grihasta), recluse (vanaprastha) and renunciate (sannyasa) ashramas respectively.
- Children need to be spiritually vaccinated. Most parents worry about vaccinating the child's body. It is more important to vaccinate their minds than their bodies. For once the mind is vaccinated the body will not succumb to diseases.
- The human mind up to the ages of 17 and 18 is constantly guided by likes and dislikes rather than thinking, reason and judgment. The likes and dislikes have to be constantly watched and the right choices made. Again the Bhagavad Gita warns humanity against this deadly enemy within.
- Children, particularly youth, are intelligent and have a lot of energy. Intelligence and energy without proper guidance and right value systems can be disastrous.
- Most parents are simply financing their children's material needs rather than bringing them up. Parenting is far deeper than that.
- One of the very essential gifts parents can give to the children is to show unconditional love to each other. This greatly influences the emotional development of the children.

- Unreasonable ‘do’s and don’ts’ make their minds revolt. Even in the spiritual field the do’s and don’ts make them revolt against religion. When you force, their mind rejects, when you deny them their mind craves for the same — i.e. what you resist will persist.

The foregoing reveals that to attain the complete development of the child it is necessary to follow the Vedic teachings of the samskaras, purusharthas, and the varnashrama dharma. If the above teachings were followed properly, then it would lead to realization of the ultimate goal of life. Angajan pointed out that following the varnashrama was a scientific principle and if followed diligently it would lead to the wholesome development of the mind. He also alluded to the principle that a healthy mind will take one a long way in eradicating the miseries of material life. It was therefore important not only to cater for the material body but also to nurture spiritual evolution.

5.9.1 REPONSE FROM MADHAVAN: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Arun Madhavan, an interviewee, and member of the Art of Living Foundation (Bangalore, India) made the following suggestions on parenting and child development:

- At an early age, knowledge on brahmacharya, grihastha, vanaprastha, and sannyasa should be imparted to children.
- It is also important that at an early age the child is encouraged to understand the replies to the following questions: Who am I? Where did

I come from? Where am I going? They must be made aware of this precious human birth and that it is not merely made up of this physical body but the mind, intellect, and soul.

- The mind can be a powerful tool if it is directed properly towards realizing the higher goals of life.
- Hinduism imparts the knowledge of pranayam. If you get the child connected to the breath at an early stage as we do in the Art Excel programmes, then it will help the child connect to the spirit. If the spirit feels down then children are depressed. The breath also facilitates a process to flush out toxins in the body. Parents should follow a routine every morning and together with their children, do the pranayam techniques. This will kick start the day on a positive note. When the mind is clear then concentration is much higher.
- Yoga asanas and healthy eating habits are another feature of ancient wisdom to help grow children up in a holistic way. Yoga means union with the divine. Yoga asanas connect the mind and body with the spirit. Together with yoga asanas, pranayam and following a healthy diet presented by Ayurvedic teachings, the parent will have no problems rearing their child towards health and happiness.
- The key to success in parenting is that they must be good role models in all aspects of life.

The above reinforces the fundamental belief that education in the varnashrama will lead to the cultivation of sound values in the child from a young age. Coupled with this education, the child should be exposed to the basic philosophical questions of “Who am I?” etc, since existence has different facets to it, namely the cultivation of the body, mind and spirit. It was also shown that diet and pranayama are vital to create a healthy and peaceful child.

5.9.2 POINTS FROM DEEPAK CHOPRA'S BOOK ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Deepak Chopra (1997) in his book: "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success for Parents" makes relevant points on how to utilize seven days of the week to make gradual spiritual progress.

Every parent's desire is to see their child reach the highest degree of success through spirit, that is the ability to care, love, have compassion, feel joy and spread it to others. The child must understand that human life is sacred and serves a purpose and success can be reached through the creative power (Chopra: 1997: 19-20).

The earlier in life we teach our children the knowledge of spirit and that they are unique individuals, the easier they will learn to live their lives in a harmonious and creative way. The divine intention is for every human being to enjoy abundance and unlimited success. They must effortlessly develop faith and devotion for the spirit (Chopra: 1997: 30).

Prahlad's life teaches that developing faith and devotion from an early age helps to understand the ultimate goal of life. Chapter 3 of this study elaborately discusses Prahlad's life story. Chopra designed a programme for families to follow so that the child will get in touch with his spirit. Chopra emphasizes the significance for the child to deeply connect with spirit, so that the success of human life can be realised.

All members of the family should participate in these activities, since they take at most half an hour. At dinnertime, all members should gather and share what they have done, observed and learnt. The discussion is informal and voluntary. In this way a family spends quality time in knowing each other.

In brief, the law of pure potentiality teaches that no one can be labelled or judged because life is full of possibilities, everything is within us, and nothing outside one's self can affect one. This law simply means see everyone equally in the light of love, without making judgements. To teach a child to be non-judgemental is not easy. A positive approach should be taken and each child should be asked to find one good lovable quality in one another. This task could be discussed at dinnertime.

The giving should take a shape which encourages them to share essential values such as love, care and support. You could give a smile, a word of encouragement, or help with chores. "A ritual of gratitude, shared by the whole family, is a nice way to acknowledge each other. Around the dinner table we should give gratitude not only for the food but also for the happenings of the day, e.g. I'm thankful, we are all healthy and happy today, I am grateful to be chosen to be part of the school play" (Chopra: 1997: 77). The attitude of gratitude embedded in a child is a key to connect them to spirit because appreciation and gratitude comes from the spirit. Children must be made aware of the greatness of life and that life is a gift to be fully lived.

"Children must be made aware that for each choice they make, the results will be either good or bad. The law of karma states that 'there is no unfairness, no victimization, all things are ordered, according to an inescapable system of cosmic cause and effect.' There is no divine power keeping us from making bad choices nor is there an escape clause that nullifies the universal rule — as you sow, so shall you reap" (Chopra: 1997: 84).

Children need to be made aware of the power of choice they possess and guidance should be given to making the right choice. Children should be taught how to use free will to make good choices. They need to be aware that the choices they make in life are critical to their success or failure.

“By connecting with the divine we ride this cosmic organizing power and take advantage of it” (Chopra: 1997: 98). In each task one should have the mood of happiness and confidence, which will avoid creating a stressful life. One should not put excessive physical effort on oneself to achieve goals. Nature has provided one with resources such as patience, acceptance and tolerance to achieve one’s desires in a stress free way.

It is important to set a very strong foundation to develop self - esteem. While children are developing they will experience many successes and failures in their lives. Parents need to teach their children to enjoy success with humility and see failures as a learning experience. Desires will arise in the minds of children and children need to be specific with their desires. They need to understand that some desires take much longer to fructify than others. Example: a child desiring to play the piano would have to wait a long time before that desire is fulfilled. Parents need to bring to the child’s awareness the talents and abilities that they possess (Chopra: 1997: 111-112).

This concept is there to teach children to do their duties selflessly. Children need to be taught that they are not this material body but spirit souls. They need to be taught to trust the spirit within and experience joy, love and peace from within. They must realize that real success is when one is joyful. The opposites are always going to exist; e.g. loss and gain. Parents need to set an example and live a balanced life.

Children need to know that as individuals, they have a very special purpose. Parents must help them to discover their talent and abilities. Different talents and abilities are awarded to everyone. Parents must assist their children to develop these abilities to the fullest.

Children should be taught the value of serving each other. The attitude of service should start from home, for example help siblings with their chores, assist their

younger brother/sister with their homework, clean the garden, etc. When you serve others, you have an opportunity to appreciate their worth.

Chopra (1997: 153-154) states: “Parents are used to being authoritative figures. From this position authoritative parents have been able to pass judgement to inflict punishment and to lay down the rules of right and wrong.”

The data has outlined the importance of a soul connection between parent and child and that both are embarking on a journey of soul evolution. The best that parents can do for their children is to perform their duty with love, dedication and purpose. It is crucial to note that emphasis is placed on vairagya (detachment), more in relation to accepting gain and loss with equal vision. Ultimately it leads to a balanced individual, not directly alluded to by the other authors.

Chopra adeptly couches Vedic thought in a western paradigm but for the same purpose, namely cultivating the progressive values of spirituality and discipline.

CONCLUSION

A synopsis of the study is as follows: In the concluding chapter a brief summary of the study is outlined. The relevant points of each chapter are made:

Chapter One dealt with the research methodology employed in the study to investigate the integral development of the child from the perspective of Hindu literature. The different approaches used for the study were as follows: qualitative, quantitative, literature review and ethno methodology. This chapter also deals with aims, rationale for the study and problems encountered in the study.

Chapter Two explains the meaning and significance of the samskaras, purusharthas, and varnashrama dharma for the development of the child. The pre-natal, childhood, educational and post educational samskaras were emphasized.

The importance of purusharthas and the varnashrama dharma in the life of a child were explained.

Chapter Three examined the biographies of saintly personalities namely Mirabai, Goswami Tulsidas, Shri Saradevi and Prahlad Maharaj. Their lives were studied to understand how they incorporated the principles of samskaras, purusharthas and varnashrama dharma, and what influence the Vedic teachings had on their lives.

Chapter Four focused on questionnaire analysis. The statistics collected from quantitative and qualitative questions were analyzed.

In Chapter Five recommendations are made and a summary of each chapter is written.

The discussions in the various chapters show the importance of the samskaras, varnashrama and purusharthas for the integral development of the child. The principles evolved by Sivananda, Angajan, Madhavan and Chopra, reinforce the importance of the development of spiritual ethics. If these principles are emulated in conjunction with the spiritual provisions of samskaras etc, there would be a considerable growth in the nurturing of future generations. Even standing by themselves, these spiritual road-signs can lead to radical changes in child rearing. The principles outlined by Sivananda, Angajan, Madhavan and Chopra are not rites of passage but constant companions on the path of human development. When both are combined, their efficacy can be potent.

The questionnaire survey, particularly the section addressed to the general community, demonstrated an overall lack of familiarity with samskaras and the other ethical rules. This is indeed significant, in that it demonstrates the urgent need for interventions. At a time in history when the very existence of our planet is under threat, every effort is required to nurture self-enrichment and think of the

whole world as one family (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) whose future prospects call for love, compassion and concerted effort for joint survival. The vision of ancient seers was for the continued survival of earth and its inhabitants. The day that they were preparing humanity for is at hand. It does not require a doomsday Prophet to awaken us to the choices available to us. Internalization of the values of our ancient religio-philosophical tenets and sensitization of the needs of society and the earth must form the bedrock for the integral development of our children for their own good. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study would contribute in some measure towards the desired goal.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

This survey is part of the Masters programme based on the Hindu Scriptures. The survey is aimed at the members of the public, especially the Hindi speaking group. It intends to emphasise the integral development of children. By means of education, the child's innate qualities must be unfolded. It must be remembered that his innate potentialities are influenced by the environment in which he lives. Since the child has to live as a member of society his development must take place according to the norms of society. This development has to be directed, that on the one hand, his individuality is not suppressed, and on the other hand he fits into society as an individual. Thus examining the Samskaras, the Varnashrama Dharma and the Purusharthas for its importance and relevance in today's world becomes pivotal for the holistic development of the child.

It is important that your view, perception and understanding of certain issues are obtained to make this research meaningful. I humbly appeal that all questions be completed, so that this survey can be adequately analysed. If you are uncertain, unsure of an answer or issue that is being questioned, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name (Optional)

2. Address _____

3. Age group

- 0 – 19 20 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49
 50 – 59 60 – 69 70+

4. Sex

- Male Female

5. Marital Status

- Single Married Divorced
 Widowed

6. Education

- None Primary Secondary
 University
 Technikon/College of Education

7. Indicate occupation below:

- PROFESSIONAL
Educational eg. Teacher, Lecturer
Medical and Related eg. Doctor, Nurse
Technical eg. Laboratory, Electronics
Legal eg. Attorney
Other eg. Engineer, Scientist
- Managerial and Clerical workers eg. Clerk, Company Director, Accountant
 Salesworker eg. Shop assistant, Insurance salesman
 Transport and Communication workers eg. Bus driver, Postman, Telephone operator, Taxi driver, stoker.
 Service, Sport and Recreational Work eg. Chefs, Waiters, Hairdressers, Police, etc
 Mining and Quarry Workers
 Artisans and Semi skilled workers eg. Painters, Plumbers, Motor Mechanics, Supervisors, Foreman
 Labourers (except farm labourers)
 Farmers, Farm Labourers

- Social workers
- Businessman (Self-employed)
- Housewife
- Student
- Unemployed, seeking employment, unfit to work, retired.
- Priest
- Hindi Teacher in private schools
- Other (Please specify) _____

8. Indicate Home Language Below:

- English Hindi Other (Please specify)

9. Do you live in an extended family environment?

- Yes No

B. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

1.

- Sanathanist Arya Samajist Shaivite
 Vaishnavite Shakta Vedantin
 Other (Please specify) _____ No specific Affiliation

2. Are you a member of a religious movement or organization?

- Yes No

3. If yes, specify below

- N/A Ramakrishna Centre Divine Life Society
 Hare Krishna Sai Baba Radha Soami
 Chinmaya Mission Hindu Temple
 Other (Please specify) _____

4. Which religious scripture do you read most often?

- Vedas Gita Ramayana Other None

QUESTIONS TO SINGLE / DOUBLE PARENTS

IMPORTANCE OF SAMSKARAS

1. What do you understand by the term Samskaras?

2. Do you perform Samskaras?

Yes No

3. If so, which ones

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garbhadana | <input type="checkbox"/> Punsavana | <input type="checkbox"/> Simantonnayana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jatakarma | <input type="checkbox"/> Namakarana | <input type="checkbox"/> Nishkramana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annaprashana | <input type="checkbox"/> Chudakarma | <input type="checkbox"/> Karnavedha |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upanayana | <input type="checkbox"/> Vedarambha | <input type="checkbox"/> Samavartana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vivaha | <input type="checkbox"/> Vanaprastha | <input type="checkbox"/> Sannyasa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Antyesti | | |

4. Do you think Samskaras are relevant in modern times?

Yes No

5. Based on your understanding of the Samskaras, how would you rate the status of Samskaras?

Unimportant Important Very Important

6. The child's physical, intellectual and spiritual development is essential. Do you think by performing the samskaras the above will be achieved?

Yes No

7. Are you as a parent happy performing Samskaras in a simplified way?

Yes No

8. Would you be interested in:

- Further explanations Understanding
 Performing of the Samaskaras

ASHRAMAS

1. Do you understand the Ashrama System?

Yes No

2. Would you like your children to grow up according to the Ashrama Dharama?

Yes No

3. If yes, explain why?

4. Do you think the Ashrama Dharma is necessary in the modern age?

Yes No

5. Should the Ashrama Dharma be adapted to the modern age?

Yes No

6. Do you think that observing the various stages of the social order will uplift peoples lives?

Yes No

VARNA (CASTE SYSTEM)

1. Do you believe in the Caste System?

Yes No

2. Do you think the Caste System has any relevance in today's society?

Yes No

3. Would you like your child to follow the Caste System?

Yes No

4. Should a certain caste perform certain Samskaras only?

Yes No

5. Do you think all people should be allowed to perform all the Samskaras?

Yes No

6. Do you think a good understanding of the caste system will help the child develop holistically?

- Yes No

HINDU RITUALS, FASTS AND FESTIVALS

1. What religious observances does your family participate in?

- Fast Rituals Satsangs Prayers
 Samskaras Festivals

2. Do you think the above observances will assist your child's holistic development?

- Yes No

3. Which of the following do your children observe?

- Fast Rituals Satsangs Prayers
 Samskaras Festivals

4. How are your children presently educated on the above topics?

- Priest Temple Satsang Home
 Father only Mother only Both Parents

5. How often do you pray at home as a family?

- Daily Weekly Several times a week
 Occasionally Never

6. Do you have a sacred shrine at home?

- Yes No

7. Does your family observe fasts?

- Daily Weekly Only on Religious Festivals
 Sometimes Never

8. Does the whole family fast?

- Saltless Vegetarian only Dry fast

9. Which religious observances does your child enjoy most?

- Festivals Prayer Fasting Havan
 Kirtan Rituals

SATSANG

1. Do you explain the scriptures in a simplified version to your children?
 Yes No
2. Does your child attend Satsang?
 Yes No
3. Do you think at Satsang special activities should be planned for children so that they can enjoy the Satsang at their level?
 Yes No
4. If yes, which ones do you think will interest your child
 Plays Music Dance Games Miming
 Poetry Other (Please specify)
-
5. Does your child look forward to attending Satsang?
 Yes No
6. Do you feel attending Satsang daily will help develop your child holistically?
 Yes No
7. For what reason do you attend Satsang?
 Pray To get help from God For sake of Duty
 For sake of Tradition To feel closer to God
 To get Spiritual fulfilment To educate yourself on Hindu religion
 As a social gathering Other
8. Has attending Satsang enabled you and your children to lead a better life?
 Yes No

PRACTISING HINDU PRIEST

Relevance of samskaras

1. Do you perform Samskara's for your clients?

- Yes No

2. Why are the Samskara's performed?

3. Which are the Samskara's commonly performed?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garbhadhana | <input type="checkbox"/> Punsavana | <input type="checkbox"/> Simatonnayana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jatakarma | <input type="checkbox"/> Namakarana | <input type="checkbox"/> Nishkramana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annaprashana | <input type="checkbox"/> Chudakarma | <input type="checkbox"/> Karnavedha |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upanayana | <input type="checkbox"/> Vedararbha | <input type="checkbox"/> Samavartana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vivaha | <input type="checkbox"/> Vanaprastha | <input type="checkbox"/> Sannyasa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Antyesti | | |

4. What influences, if any, do the Samskara have in instilling values in children?

5. As a practising priest which Samskara do you think are suitable for practising in this age/era?

6. Do you think there should be a revival of the Samskaras?

- Yes No

7. How are the Samskaras helping to mould one's life in the present age?

6. Do you feel parents in present times need to be well versed in their Scriptures and follow properly so that they teach by example.

Yes No

GENERAL

1. Do you believe that children should be given all round education, moral, intellectual and physical?

Yes No

2. State some of the activities you engage in to ensure the holistic development of a child?

School Sports Prayer Satsang Festivals
 Music Dance Drama Other, specify _____

3. Do you think schools provide for the integral development of a child?

Yes No

4. If no, state areas that need to be incorporated in the school curriculum.

5. Do you as parents face responsibility for the integral development of a child?

Yes No

6. Do you think by learning your language well and studying your scriptures, you would greatly contribute to the holistic development of your child?

Yes No

7. Do you feel it is imperative that your children learn their language and study the scriptures to bond deeply with their culture?

Yes No

8. If divorced or separated, describe your child's/children's behaviour pattern.

Indifferent Rebellious Insecure
 Blame themselves Hateful

9. How did you help your child cope?

Scriptures Social worker Priest
 Satsang Prayer Other (Specify)

ASHRAMA

1. Do you think Ashrama Dharma should be followed, presently?

- Yes No

2. If the Ashrama Dharam is adapted to suit the modern era, will it help to uplift the lives of the people?

- Yes No

3. As a Hindu priest which of the following do you think is relevant for the integral development of a child?

- Samskaras Ashramas Varna System
 Festivals Fast Prayer
 Satsangh Yoga

SCRIPTURES

1. What appeals to you most about the scriptures?

- Story Philosophy Moral and Ethical teachings
 Verses Kirtans Rituals

2. Do the Scriptures give you the solution to problems?

- Yes No

3. At which of the following times do you seek solace from the Scriptures?

- At times of illness When death occurs
 At times of trials and tribulations

4. Do you find that the following teachings of our Scriptures will impact on the Holistic development of the child?

- Purity of mind Preparedness to take righteous action
 Resistance of the six vices (lust, anger pride, greed, attachment, jealousy)
 Fulfilling promises Opposing evils in one's own family
 Responsibility Commitment

5. Do you think that teaching of the scriptures, if followed properly can build a better society and a stronger nation?

- Yes No

10. Do you have any other views that you would like to add/share about complete education and development of the child?

11. Do you think that anything is lacking in the education of the child in the present school system? Please explain.

EXPLANATION OF VARIOUS CONCEPTS

What is a Samskara?

It is a sacrament that purifies the body, the mind, the intellect, and the soul itself so that one's entire life is moulded in dharma (righteousness).

A brief introduction of the sixteen samskaras

Garbhadhana

This samskara is performed for the fulfilment of ones parental obligation and development of the human race.

Pumsavana

This samskara is performed during the third month of pregnancy in order that a strong religious atmosphere is created at an early stage of the physical growth of the child.

Simantonnayana

This samskara is performed in the seventh month of pregnancy with special emphasis on a healthy mental growth.

Jatakarama

This samskara is performed at birth and welcomes the new-born child.

Namakarana

On the eleventh day after birth this samskara is performed and the child is given a suitable name which is elected according to a scriptural procedure.

Nishkramana

This samskara is performed in the fourth month after birth, when the child is taken outside in the freshness of the morning sunlight.

Annaprashana

In the seventh or eighth month when teething commences, this samskara is performed and the child is fed with cooked food for the first time.

Chudakarma

This samskara is performed at the age of one year or three years. All the hair is removed by shaving the head.

Karnavedha

In the third or fifth year this samskara is performed and the child's ears are pierced.

Upanayana

This samskara is performed anytime from the fifth year to the eight-year age. Up to this stage the child has grown up under the care of the parents but from now onwards he would remain closer to his guru (teacher) who would take charge of him.

Vedarambha

This samskara is performed on the day of the Upanayana. The teacher provides the pupil with specific instructions on the scriptures.

Samavartana

This samskara is performed at the stage of twenty-five years, when the student has completed his study and ready to take leave of his teacher.

Vivaha

After completing brahmacharya (celibate stage) the vivaha marriage samskara is performed.

Vanaprastha

At the age of fifty the vanaprastha samskaras are performed.

Sannyasa

At the age of seventy-five or when the person is able to renounce all his worldly objects he could enter the sanyasa ashram.

Antyesti

The final rites are performed at death.

CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIETY

For the development of society collectively, a system known as Varna (Class System), was devised, while for individual development Ashramas have been advocated. The system of Varna (Class System) has been formulated by the qualities, natural tendencies and actions of persons. In the structure of division of society the intellectual ones were given the name Brahmin, the energetic and dominating group Kshatriya, people of commercial tendencies were given the name Vaishya, those that took to manual labour were given the name Shudra. Amongst the various class systems no one was superior or inferior.

FOUR STAGES IN LIFE (ASHRAMAS)

The Hindu religion has recognised the importance of individual and social aspects of life. The Vedic ideal of a life-span of a hundred years is envisaged in four ashramas. The four Ashramas are Brahmacharya (Celibacy), Grihastha (Householder), Vanaprastha (A partial renunciate) and Sanyasa (Renunciate), Vedalankar (1985: 50-55).

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name of Interviewee: _____ Age: _____

Sex: _____ Occupation: _____

Religious Affiliation: _____

Literacy in Hindi: _____

Level of literacy in Hindu Shastras: _____

1. Why has Hinduism developed the samskaras, varna (Caste system), ashramas, and purusharthas?
2. How relevant are the above teaching in modern times, to develop the child holistically?
3. To what extent can the teaching be adapted and utilized in the modern times?
4. Do you think the Hindu scriptures chalk out a plan of action to eliminate the problems that the family are experiencing today eg child abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism and rape...?
5. What are some of the fundamental guidelines that Hinduism offers to parents in rearing children?
6. Today's modern parents have made material progress in every way their ideal, neglecting their responsibilities and accountability to develop their children in all aspects of life. This is having a major impact on the lives of the children, whereby they are turning to drugs, violence, alcoholism etc. Comment on the opinions expressed.
7. Do you feel parents should emulate ethical values, that they want to instill in their children and live their lives the exemplary way, based on the scriptures? If yes, state how.
8. Purusharthas are the four aims and objectives of man's life. How can this concept be practically implemented in the child's upbringing?
9. Do you think that (Artha) wealth, (Karma) enjoyments, are given dominance to life in the modern times? If so why?

10. How can we create a balanced life, for the upliftment of the child?
11. Do the Hindu scriptures cater for the development of all aspects of the child's life i.e. physical, emotional and intellectual.
12. If so, comment from the shastras, how can these aspects be developed?
13. Which are some of the scriptures one can consult in order to retrieve knowledge on upbringing of children?
14. Should parents, on a daily basis read from scriptures and instill human values in their children. Explain.
15. In your opinion what kind of daily programme should a parent devise In order to cater for all aspects of knowledge?
16. Do you feel couples before marriage should attend intensive training workshops to really understand the principles of Grihastha Ashram and the responsibilities that go with it?
17. If yes, explain ways and means to implement this process so that many traumas that families experience today can be avoided eg divorce, domestic violence, child abuse etc.
18. What parenting skills are given in the shastras?
19. Marriage seems to be plagued with adultery and domestic violence. What advise can married couples be given to avoid these emotional traumas?
20. What impact does the above behaviour have on the children?
21. How can the many aspects of God be introduced to the child?
22. Do you think the purpose of life should be inculcated in a child from an early age? Explain.
23. Should children be taught at every step, the significance of religious symbols used in rituals and festivals? If yes, why?
24. How can you encourage your child to engage in daily prayer?

25. How often children should be advised to pray?
26. Do you believe a sacred shrine should be created in your home, if so why?
27. Which religious observance does your child enjoy and why?
28. If and when children show resistance to satsang how do you encourage them?
29. Do you feel special activities should be created at satsang for children to learn at their level?
30. Have you found a significant difference of behaviour patterns among children who attend satsang to those that do not?
31. If knowledge on samskaras, varnas, ashramas, purusharthas was disseminated at satsangs and all religious organization on an on going basis, would the awareness be more significant.
32. If all religious organizations followed the teachings of sastras and campaigned child abuse, would this create an awakening.
33. What is your version of the caste system?
34. Do you feel people place too much of emphasis on career choices that children are wishing to undertake and as a result, sometimes push children into wrong careers.
35. In South Africa the “caste system” is practiced with regard to career choices. Do you agree? If yes, explain.
36. Considering the modern times, emphasis should be given to the brahmacharya and the grihastha ashramas. Do you agree? Comment on this.
37. From the Hindu point of view what type of diet is advocated, and if followed properly, will it ensure an ideal healthy lifestyle for a child?
38. How does the child’s diet have an impact on the mind?
39. Will doing yoga asanas impact on the physical development of the child? If so explain further.

APPENDIX C

The Children's Charter of South Africa

- Children should be treated the same, no matter their colour, race, sex, language, or religion.
- Children have a right to a name and nationality.
- Children should have a say in all matters that affect them.
- Children have a right to free and proper representation in courtrooms and hearing affecting their future.
- Children should be free to practice their own religion and culture
- Children should be protected from all types of violence.
- Children should not be held in prison or police cells.
- Children have a right to a loving and caring family, a proper home, clothing and healthy food.
- Children have a right to good health care and medical attention, and should be protected from drugs, cigarettes and alcohol.
- Children have a right to free, non-racial and non-sexist, compulsory education.
- Children should be taught about sexuality, Aids, Human Rights, child abuse and how to protect themselves.
- Parents and teachers have a duty to become involved in the development of children's education and respect their traditions, cultures and histories.
- Children should not work before a certain age and there should be regulations and penalties to protect children from child labour.
- The government must look after and care for homeless "street" children and must protect them from harassment and abuse from the police and public.
- Children who are orphaned, abandoned, refugees or exiled should be placed in safe and secure "families".
- All persons must be made aware of the problems of children and help to make sure that children's rights are respected.
- All persons have a duty to report all violence, abuse and neglect of children.
- All children have a right to know and understand their rights.

These rights and duties are based on the Children's Charter of South Africa adopted at the Children's Summit, 1st June 1992.

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