Manifesto

of

Hindu Renaissance

Author – Anil Chawla
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A. Introduction

We are fortunate to be living in a time when an old era is ending and a new one is about to begin. We are fortunate not because we have the opportunity to witness this grand turn of history. We are fortunate because we shoulder the responsibility of carrying forward the events that will usher in an epoch of peace and prosperity for the whole world.

The past millennium has been most violent in mankind’s history. Unprecedented genocides were committed during the past thousand years. Wars during the millennium were more devastating than ever before. Slavery, inquisitions, witch-hunting, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, imperialism, carpet bombing, nuclear weapons – are some words that illustrate the character of the past one thousand years.

Rising beyond the past thousand years, today when humanity is looking with hope for the next thousand years there is growing realization that some fundamental changes are needed in today’s paradigm of human thought, which has been shaped during the past thousand years by increasing influence of one-book religions. As the world looks to redefine the paradigm of human ideas, relationships and organizations, there is growing interest in the religions that existed prior to the rise of one-book religions.

One-book religions have often used the term “pagan” as a derogatory term for all native religions that did not follow any one particular book. Let us continue using the term (in the absence of any other more convenient term) without any derogatory connotations. Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism are some of the leading pagan religions alive today. But there were many others including practices and belief systems of natives of Europe, Americas, Africa and Australia.

It is worth noting that the pagan religions never had any mutual animosity like the type seen among the one-book religions. Relations between different pagan religions have always been friendly and based on mutual trust, cooperation, respect and learning from each other’s experiences and knowledge. There has always been a spirit of tolerance, understanding and exchange between different pagan religions with no one claiming to be the only true one or being superior to everyone else.

Even though each pagan religion was independent and equal to every other one, Hinduism enjoyed a position of friend, philosopher and guide for all other pagan religions. This central position of Hinduism was surely not evidenced by any formal declaration. Nevertheless, in an informal way Hinduism was critical and important source of strength and guidance for all pagan religions across the world.
As the interest in pagan religions grows across the world and as people seek to go back to their native religions, the interest in Hinduism is also growing. Pagan religions often appear to be loose, contradictory, ill-defined, nebulous set of rituals, practices and beliefs. This is so largely because of the tendency to see pagan religions through the eyes of one-book religions. There is clearly a need to rediscover or redefine the intellectual or philosophical framework that for centuries formed the backbone of almost all pagan religions.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the intellectual philosophical framework or in other words the paradigm of Hinduism as it existed in ancient times. This paradigm may probably be useful to define (or rediscover) an ideological structure for other pagan religions.

A word of caution at this point – Hinduism does not seek to impose its framework on any pagan religion. Let no one smell any attempt to proselytize. The Hindu way is always to utter and not to argue. There is no attempt to even convince.

But before taking up the exercise of rediscovering the intellectual framework of ancient Hinduism it is necessary to go back in time and understand the reasons for the debacle of Hindus and Hinduism. Surely, some weakness had crept into the Hindu thought process. Understanding that weakness and removing it is a challenge that the Hindus must face up to.

In the past thousand years, Hindus were under attack. The religious mindset that evolved during this period was either defensive or provided a sedative to relieve from the pains. As Hinduism seeks a new role on the global arena in shaping human thought, in defining human relationships and in helping human beings live a more meaningful life, it needs to shed the defensive as well as sedative roles and rediscover its old historical self of one and a half millennium ago.

The process of rediscovering the ancient Hinduism and of it becoming a guide for thought process of the world is not motivated by any individual’s or group’s or nation’s desire for hegemony. The motivation is a deep-rooted desire to lead the world to a new era of peace, prosperity and well-being. The motivation is to heal the wounds of the past thousand years. It is time to liberate the human mind from the cast iron walls of one-bookisms, clergy, church and such other institutions.

In the past century while shaking off the chains of one-bookisms, human mind moved towards the other extreme of anarchical individualism and materialism. It was fine to shed the burqa (veil) and the mindset wherein taking a bath was an act of sin, but feeling proud of displaying one’s genitals in public is surely as ridiculous and needs to be condemned in as strong terms. Not surprisingly, presently the world seems to have got tired with the twentieth century’s concept of freedom even though one does not want to go back to the dark middle ages.
The human race is groping for a new intellectual paradigm that will provide the middle path between the burqa and the bikini. Hindu renaissance seeks to provide the middle path. Hinduism is on one hand critical of the do-all-that-pleases-you attitude and on the other hand refuses to see human beings as sheep. It provides one freedom within the broad constraints of social good leaving micro-level decision making to each individual.

When one looks at mankind’s journey spanning many millennia, an individual is an infinitesimally small entity. The author of this manifesto is no exception. He has no illusions of being able to shape history of mankind. The movement of history happens due to reasons and forces that we can never fully understand. Each one of us can only play a small role in this grand movement. As mankind moves to the direction of Global Hindu Renaissance, let us all join this turn of events and shoulder the responsibility that is cast on us.

B. Historical Perspective A – The Reason for the Fall

Let us go back in time to about 1000 CE. At that time all Abrahamic religions or one-book religions were fringe entities. Though no reliable statistics are available, it may be reasonably assumed that, followers of one-book religions constituted less than 5% of world population at that time (currently, they account for about 50% of world population). Europe had not been Christianized except in small pockets. Americas and Australia were unknown to Christian missionaries and Islamic armies. Africa (excluding some parts in North) had neither Islam nor Christianity. Most of Asia had never heard of one-book religions.
In the pre-1000 era, there were many popular religious traditions – all locally rooted in their respective regions. Yet, these traditions were linked to each other at a philosophical level. All of them respected and worshipped nature. All of them helped a human being live a more complete life. All of them stressed on basic human values like family, love, kindness, social responsibilities etc. It can even be said that they shared a perspective of the world. To understand the religious traditions of that era, it is useful to consider a large banyan tree with multiple roots – each root as important as the other with no single root in a position to claim the right to be the main trunk.

Names of specific regional religious traditions are not important. We need to look at the character and not the names. The commonality of character is undeniable whether one is looking at the pre-1000-CE traditions of Africa or Australia or Americas or Europe or Asia.

During that period, the universities or centers of learning in Indian sub-continent (and probably in some other countries like China) provided useful intellectual guidance and support to the global thought and faith process. The destruction of centers of learning in Indian sub-continent after 1000 CE, hence, delivered a major blow to the global religious traditions, which were called as pagan in a derogatory way by one-book religions.

The fall of temple of Somnath (located in the state of Gujarat on the western coast of India) in 1024 CE by an Islamic invader was the beginning of the process of destruction of centers of learning in India. It represents a key event in world history. Egypt and Iran had been conquered before that. But India was a prize catch – not only because it was a rich country but because the country was one big impediment in the path of the spread of one-book religions. The country’s institutions had the best libraries in the world. The respect that her centers of learning received across the world was something to be envious of. During the next few centuries, the invaders made sure that they burnt every library and also every book that they could lay their hands on. Of course, it may be mentioned here that they had earlier done the same in Egypt and Iran. The scale of destruction in India and its global impact was much more immense.

It is said that all wars are first lost in the minds then on the battle field. Two centuries before the fall of Somnath the intellectual class of India had started moving towards what has been called as Vedanta (literally meaning end of Vedas or what comes after the Vedas). Different schools of Vedanta do some fine hairsplitting on various metaphysical and philosophical questions. Without getting into the details, one can observe that Vedanta focused on Moksh (salvation) while the earlier thought was focused entirely on Trivarg (Dharm, Arth and Kaam). In a way, Vedanta was a turning point in the religious thought of that time. Suddenly, the world was being seen as an illusion (maya). Surely, there were bright arguments that could dazzle anyone into believing that world is indeed illusory.

Studying philosophy as a young student, one is often impressed by smart quotes like – “A man slept and dreamt that he was a butterfly. He woke up and wondered
whether it was a butterfly dreaming that it was a man or a man dreaming that it was a butterfly." In due course, one learns that such smart twist of words is good to impress people about one’s intellectual powers but in reality they are diversions that must be avoided. The Vedanta school of philosophy did not (and has not) learn this simple lesson.

The illusionism of Vedanta combined with focus on Moksh led the centers of learning across India on a wild-goose chase. They ignored development of science and technology tying themselves in beautiful knots over meaningless metaphysical debates. It is also likely that they discouraged the kings from spending on armies and armaments; and encouraged them to spend on temples to make sure that they got moksh. It is interesting to note that Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan (excluding Uttar Kand) makes no mention of moksh. In Mahabharat (excluding Moksh Parv and subsequent chapters) the consistent and oft-repeated line of thought is that there is always doubt about moksh, so one should only pursue Trivarg (Dharm, Arth and Kaam). Obviously, the Uttar Kand, and Moksh Parv were added to the original texts by Vedanta schools of thought.

The contradiction of Vedanta (and moksh-centric thought) with the original texts is too glaring to ignore. It can be said that pre-Vedanta Hinduism was practical down-to-earth and realistic while Vedanta converted Hinduism into a spiritual pursuit far removed from the realities of day-to-day life. We do not know when the move towards Vedanta started but we know the effect that it produced. By 1024 CE, the time of fall of Somnath, Vedanta had become central to the accepted academic thought in almost all Indian centers of learning.

If world is an illusion, why bother about it? Development of science and technology or even armies and arms surely cannot be a priority for someone who is aiming for the reality beyond the illusion of the world. The reality beyond the illusion is to be achieved by rituals and other procedures like elaborate worship. So, rituals and worship became central while pursuit of understanding of mundane stuff like warfare, armaments, equipments etc. were relegated to some dark dirty place outside the centers of learning. This was also the time when many centers of learning changed their focus from learning and teaching to worship and prayers. This was the metamorphosis of a university into a temple.

Of course, it must be stated that the metamorphosis was a slow process and even till the end some centers of learning retained their character. In 1193, the University of Nalanda was ransacked and its library was burnt. Somnath was a temple and Nalanda was a university, which continued to exist for almost 170 years after the fall of Somnath. It may be mentioned here that there is no mention of any temple in either Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan or in Mahabharat.

The conversion of universities into temples far removed from education of worldly subjects is a historical blunder that occurred under the influence of Vedanta and moksh-centric thought. Some might put this blame on the feet of Adi Shankaracharya. However, it seems reasonable to say that while he might have
played an important or even critical role, blame for the grand madness that gripped an entire civilization with a global footprint must surely rest on many more persons.

As a result of the historical blunder, armies lost their cutting edge. Battle of Somnath was lost in the classrooms of Indian universities much before Mahmud of Ghazni was even born. The crippling effect of Vedanta and *moksh* continued on Indian mind for many centuries even after the fall of Somnath. About two centuries after the fall of Somnath, Arabs learnt gunpowder technology from Chinese while Indians did not. Invaders coming from around 1300 CE till the time of Moguls in 1526 CE took advantage of the technological superiority achieved by use of gunpowder to defeat Hindu kings. Even during Mogul rule, while fighting with Hindu rulers the Moguls enjoyed the benefit of gunpowder. It was only in the latter half of seventeenth century that Moguls faced two adversaries who knew the use of gunpowder – Guru Govind Singh and Shivaji. Both employed Muslim experts to build their cannon power. Sure enough, both of them sounded the death knell of Mogul empire.

Another instance of inability of Hindu mind – numbed by Vedanta and moksh – to assimilate technology was seen when Europeans (British and Portuguese) landed in India. By that time Hindus as well as Muslims knew the use of gunpowder in cannons, but the miniaturization of the technology to guns or rifles was not learnt. Till as late as the first Indian war of independence in 1857, Indian forces were fighting with swords against British soldiers who had guns. Almost every major North Indian town has a statue of Queen Laxmi Bai of Jhansi who died fighting very bravely against the British. The statue always shows queen with a sword in her hand. The Queen had a sword while every British soldier had a gun. What chance did she have?
British Soldiers at Lucknow 1857-58
Note the gun with each soldier in contrast with the queen who had no gun
Talking of India’s freedom movement, it is worthwhile to note that the collapse of Indian struggle in 1857 had killed all hopes of the country’s independence. The work of raising the consciousness of the country out of the despair that it had fallen into was the work of two Hindu sanyasis (monks) – Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand.

The mainstream flag bearers and thought leaders of Hinduism opposed tooth and nail both Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand just as they had opposed Guru Gobind Singh and Maharaj Shivaji.

Shankaracharyas and such other designation bearers of Hindu religion avoided playing any role in India’s freedom struggle. They had a justification for doing this. They argued that they were concerned with religion and spiritual matters. They did not want to get their hands dirty with politics or for that matter with anything worldly – all that is maya (illusion). Of course, they had no qualms about collecting gold and silver by tons. The schism between the spiritual world and the mundane realities of day-to-day life was (and is still) a convenient one for all those who live a so-called religious or spiritual life. They bury their heads in sands of Vedanta when it suits them and jump out when they see an opportunity to collect money.

The flag bearers of Hinduism who see spiritual and real life as two separate worlds ignore the fact that the foundation epics of Hinduism – Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan and Mahabharat – are stories of war. The persons that Hindus hold in the greatest regard – Ved Vyas, Ram, Krishn, and Arjun – are all men of action who did not spend their life chanting away hymns. In fact, in both Shrimad Valmikiy Ramayan and Mahabharat, the persons who get killed and lose the war are the ones who spent huge time in worshipping one deity or the other. Ravan, Indrajit, Karn – all of them were great devotees. Karn’s worship of Sun was legendary. Mahabharat mentions about how he used to stand in waist-deep water from dawn to dusk facing the sun. Yet, the cosmic being had to plan and ensure his defeat and death.
Let us get back to our attempt to understand the history of past one thousand years. The fall of Somnath was the first among a chain of events across the globe. A massive banyan tree had been infected by a virus which led to its primary trunk becoming weak causing a breach in its immunological systems. What followed was a devastation that could never have been imagined by human mind before that day.
The worst possible genocide was committed in every part of the world. Christianification of Europe was a bloody affair with massacres, harsh inquisitions and witch-hunting continuing for more than five centuries. What Europe saw was surely nothing compared to what the natives of Americas, Australia and Africa had to bear. Asia had its own share of troubles with Islamic as well as Christian armies. Just about a century ago, China had to suffer Opium Wars. Less than a century ago, India suffered man-made famines that killed millions.

Sure enough, not all of this bloodshed was caused by armies of one-book religions. Mostly it was caused by secular armies and institutions driven by greed. The fact is that generally speaking in the past one thousand years the sufferer was often a pagan and the suffering was inflicted by a follower or pseudo-follower of one-book religions. In all cases the institutions of one-book religions (Church or the Islamic heads) either directly supported the act of inflicting pain, suffering and bloodshed or at least looked the other way. The world cannot forget the support extended to slavery and colonialism by the Church as well as by the Islamic wise men. The script for Opium Wars was written by Christian missionaries. The Churches in Kolkata continued to serve bread and wine even as millions starved to death in the Bengal famine.

No, we do not complain. We are not even surprised by the behavior of the clergy and wise men. They did what seemed (and still seems) right to them. Our complaint is with our own wise men and thought leaders. Hindu Shankaracharyas or such other temple-heads have never spoken a word about Bengal famine. May we ask why?

While we leave it to them to answer such uncomfortable questions, let us just ignore them and move forward in our study of history. Before that let us state the lessons that we can learn from the ideological blunders that led to a thousand years of pain and suffering for the world:

a) Moksh or liberation is an illusion that only leads to disaster. It is high time that we purged our minds of Moksh.

b) The world is a reality. Anyone who argues otherwise must be ignored.
C. Historical Perspective B – Surviving After the Fall

It is indeed tough to live through a period of history when all the old institutions are being destroyed and air smells of pain, oppression, torture and genocide. Keeping one’s belief system intact is almost impossible in such difficult times. Europe succumbed and adopted Christianity. Natives of Americas and Australia were wiped out. West Asia and North Africa could not resist the Islamic onslaught and converted.

The only country that faced both Islamic invaders as well as Christian ones is India. The unique aspect is that despite losing to both, a large portion of the population of India successfully resisted both the one-book religions and retained their original belief system in some form or the other. No other country in the world can claim this achievement.

Survival through thousand years of oppressive, torturous regimes was not easy for Hindus in India. They could survive and save their ancient belief system partly due to inherent strength of the belief system and partly because they were quick to adapt, learn and modify.

Hindu religion and thought went through a transformation during the past thousand years. As institutions of learning were being destroyed and social structure was suffering shocks, a new movement emerged in Hinduism. The movement was based on bhakti or devotion to an incarnation of the Almighty. Many Hindu saints that are known today were part of Bhakti Movement. Goswami Tulsidas, Surdas and Meera were the prominent saints of the movement. It should be noted that Hinduism prior to 1024 CE had no saints who laid stress on bhakti or devotion. Bhakti Movement was a phenomenon of the millennium of pain and torture that Hindus suffered.

Bhakti Movement served a very useful role in the times in which it emerged. It helped Hindus bear the pain. It helped to keep the flame of faith alive when there seemed to be no hope. The description “opium of the masses” is a fitting one for the Bhakti movement version of Hinduism. However, one must understand that a sedative has a useful role when a body is undergoing a surgical operation. The painful incisions that were being applied on the Hindu body could not have been endured if the saints of Bhakti Movement had not provided their soothing touch.

With due respect to the great saints of the past millennium, it is time to move on and shed the sedative lest it becomes a life-threatening habit. As Hinduism struggles to rise up from the ashes of yesterday, it must grow out of its Bhakti Movement version. It is time that we keep aside Goswami Tulsidas’s Ramcharit Manas and rediscover the ancient Ramayan of Valmiki (excluding Uttar Kand, which was added much later). It may be clarified here that moving away from Bhakti movement does not mean completely giving up devotion to a cosmic reality or its manifestations. It is just that the level of emphasis that Bhakti movement placed on bhakti is not acceptable.
It may be pointed out here that Bhakti Movement was a natural evolution from the Vedanta or Moksh-centered thought that had gripped Hinduism for centuries before the rise of the movement. We shall not get into the details of the process of that evolution and shall instead look at another phenomenon that took place during the past century.

In the previous section there was a mention of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand, the two great monks who played a historical role in kindling the fire of India’s independence movement. Both were truly anti-thesis of Bhakti Movement. They emphasized knowledge and action. They inspired people of India to dream of freedom.

Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha were the two pioneer nation-wide organizations that pushed for India’s freedom. However, an interesting unintended offshoot of their efforts was the association of Hinduism with the geographical entity called India.

One does not know how this falsity got coinage that Arabs who could not pronounce Sindhu used the word Hindu to refer to all those who lived east of Sindhu. So the word Hindu was denied any etymological links to Sanskrit or to the ancient philosophical traditions. The Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and later Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh found it convenient to lap up this falsity primarily because it suited their nationalistic agenda. The inspiration that non-bhakti Hindu thought provided to Indian nationalistic movement is a historical reality that led to the collapse of imperialism across the world. But the unfortunate side effect of it has been to limit Hinduism to a land-mass.

Sadly, the present-day so-called Hindu organizations believe in a definition of Hinduism that is focused on Hinduism as a faith or way-of-life based on devotion to a land-mass. This is most harmful to Hinduism as a global religion.

As Hinduism seeks to rise to provide friendship, guidance and support to non-one-book religions across the world, it must first rid itself of all such geography-centered definitions that cut it off from its true roots.

To sum up our review of the past thousand years of Hindu thought, we can say that for a true Hindu renaissance, Hinduism must shed away the following two:

a) Bhakti Movement or a belief that bhakti (or devotion) can solve one and all problems for an individual

b) Linking Hinduism to the land-mass called India
D. Some Definitions

The word “Hindu” is made of two words H and Indu. H means the sky and Indu means the moon. This can be interpreted to mean that one who spreads cool light like the moon in the sky is a Hindu. Another word associated with Hindu is Bharat. In fact, Bharat is a synonym of Hindu. The word Bharat is made of two words Bha and Rat. Bha means Light and Rat means the one who is full of or saturated with. In other words Bharat means the one who is full of and spreads light.

The word Bharatvarsh has often been used for a large part of land. Varsh means varsha or rain. Combining the meanings of Bharat and varsh we can understand that the word Bharatvarsh was used for the region where the Hindu knowledge rained or had influence.

Essentially, both the words, Hindu and Bharat, refer to a person glowing with knowledge. Hinduism accords the highest place to learned persons. A Hindu is supposed to always respect the learned. This is one of the fundamental foundation blocks of Hinduism – more about it later.

The totality of the sky including the earth and all other planets is named as Universe or Cosmos and is known by the word Brahm in Sanskrit. This Universe or Cosmos is shashwat or eternal, in other words it has always been and shall always be, though it keeps changing. Hindu sees himself as a part of the Universe or Cosmos. A Hindu’s belief, faith, actions, lifestyle, thoughts should be in accordance with the rules of the Cosmos. There could possibly be different views about the Cosmos between two persons due to different perspectives. However, if the difference of views is due to different perspectives and not due to preconceived notions, both persons, though holding divergent views are Hindus.

It is also necessary to understand the word Dharm. It is best to understand Dharm as obligations cast upon one by relationships that one is part of. The word Dharan and Dharm have the same root. Dharan means to wear or to carry and Dharm refers to what is put on. Dharm can be compared to clothing. Just as a person changes his clothes as per the time-place and his own personal requirements, the Dharm for a Hindu is constantly changing. Dharm, on one hand helps one live one’s life as per the requirements of the cosmos and on the other hand, assists one in acting as per one’s own nature and aptitude. A more detailed discussion on dharm will come later.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify that the word “dharm” is used with two different meanings. In one sense, it refers to an individual’s obligations in a relationship. For example, one can talk about one’s dharm to one’s father. On the other hand, the word “dharm” is also used to refer to the totality of the belief system, ideological framework and philosophical paradigm of Hinduism. Both the meanings are correct and are used widely.
E. Overview of Basic Structure of Hindu Thought

Hinduism is a comprehensive holistic thought system that covers every aspect of human life. The above diagram illustrates the fundamental foundation blocks of Hindu thought system. As shown in the above diagram, the three fundamental foundation blocks of Hindu Dharm are as follows:

- **Trisutr** – Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram – Truth, Goodness and Beauty
- **Respecting the Learned** also called Brahmin. Notably, the Brahmin is never worshipped. One respects the Brahmin and follows the path shown by the learned one.
- **Dev Life** refers to living life like a dev. One must not confuse dev with the concept of God as seen in all one-book religions. It is also important to understand that the focus is on living life of a dev and not worshipping a dev.

Trivarg – The Trivarg (Dharm, Arth, Kaam) are the three acceptable reasons for any action of an individual. An individual is supposed to accord top priority to Dharm, second priority to Arth and the lowest priority to Kaam. While one is advised to accord different priorities, one must not ignore either of the three. While keeping one’s focus on Trivarg or the three acceptable reasons or inspirations for human actions, one must always take care of avoiding the negative list - Lobh (Greed), Krodh (Anger), Ahamkar, Maan, Abhimaan (Ego, Status, Conceit), Moh (Delusion), Pratishodh (Revenge), Eirshya (Jealousy), Bhay (Fear), Ghrina (Hatred)

Let us understand each foundation block in some detail. We could begin at any point in the circular diagram shown above and proceed in any direction. Let us begin with Trisutr.

F. Trisutr – Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram – Truth, Goodness and Beauty

SATYAM – The first fundamental condition for Hindu Dharm is Satyam or truth. The cosmos or the world is experienced by us through our senses and we make an image of the world or parts of it on our mind. If the image corresponds to the world as it exists, the image is truth or else it is not truth. Our capacities and abilities to see, observe, experience and understand are limited. Hence, our ability to create mental images of the world is limited. Just as four blind men described an elephant in four different ways, we make different images of the world. For example, a biologist and a poet look at a flower in different ways. Hindu accepts this difference in perspective and the ensuing difference in opinions, while at the same time giving utmost importance to Satyam or truth. If any idea or thought is against truth, a Hindu can never accept it.

The evaluation of the correspondence between the image and the world is by means of evidence or proof. There can be an epistemological debate about the suitability of different types of possible evidence and proof. It is likely that some types of evidence are accepted by one while the same types of evidence are rejected by others. Such a difference of opinion is well-accepted.

It is important to compare the commitment of a Hindu towards truth with that of the followers of other religions. For a Christian, every word in Bible is the ultimate truth. During the reign of the Church, any attempt to even collect evidence that might
contradict something written in the Bible was considered blasphemy and was punishable by death. Apparently, some holy book says that a man has more teeth and ribs than a woman has. During the medieval period, it was blasphemy and criminal offence to try to gather evidence against the sacred book by counting the teeth or ribs of men and women. For hundreds of years no one in Europe could hence count teeth or ribs. In any single-book-based religion such problems are likely to occur at some time or the other. Both Christianity and Islam have at some points in their history opposed science since it clashed with the truth as provided in their sacred books.

Hinduism has never been and can never be opposed to science due to the fundamental belief in truth. It was this belief in truth that led to the development and growth of science and knowledge in ancient India. The glow of science and knowledge made the Hindu full of light and the region that was illuminated by this shower of light was called Bharatvarsh.

**SHIVAM** - After accepting Truth, it is necessary to go a step further and look at the welfare of the world. Every act, belief and thought of a human being must be evaluated on the basis of the criterion of welfare of the world. An act or belief or thought is not proper or acceptable if it does not promote the welfare of the world even though it may be based on Truth. For example, a person’s strong desire may be a reality or a truth but if the satisfaction of the desire does not lead to universal welfare, it is not proper to permit the person to satisfy his desire. Just as there can be differences of opinion and perception in matters related to truth, there may be differences of opinion regarding the concept of universal welfare, which may change from time to time and from region to region and also based on the nature and aptitude of various individuals. Such differences of opinion are well accepted and though there may be debate or discussion to resolve the differences, there is no attempt to iron out all differences and arrive at a uniform standard code. The acceptance of differences based on the needs of place-time and individuals has led to Hindu Dharm becoming different for each person, for every region and from time to time. However, if anyone ignores the argument of welfare and advances quotations from any book as an argument, he is not a Hindu.

The concept of **SHIVAM** as universal welfare based on the realities of time and place is deeply embedded in the Hindu psyche. On various occasions this has been demonstrated. For example India was one of the first few countries in the world to accept abortion since the majority of the population (Hindus) appreciated the benefits of legalized abortion without any religious restrictions. Even in matters like giving electoral rights to women there has been no dispute since the issues are examined on merits rather than on the basis of books written a few centuries ago. The examples of accepting contradictory actions and beliefs based on different ground realities are too numerous to cite. There are Hindus who are strictly vegetarians while there are others who are permitted to eat meat. There are Hindus who fast on some days during the year while on the same days there are Hindus who would eat meat and offer meat to their family deities. The opposites are always justified by logic of welfare or Shivam as might be existing at that time and place.
SUNDA

DARAM – Along with Satyam and Shivam, the third fundamental foundation stone of Trisutr is Sundaram. Anything that leads to nice (or “Su”) feelings in the inner being of a person can be called as SUNDARAM or aesthetic. It is very difficult to define the nice feelings in the inner being and each person may have his own opinion in the matter. The purpose of all arts is to give pleasure by creating nice aesthetic feelings. A Hindu accepts all arts and accepts each person’s version of SUNDARAM. Hindu accepts freedom of the individual in this regard, subject, of course, to Satyam and Shivam.

It may seem strange that something as obvious as aesthetics needs to be defined as a key fundamental block of a belief system. Yet if we look at the treatment of the subject by other religions, the distinction is too glaring. Islam treats all visual arts like painting and sculpture as forbidden and even puts strictures on music. Christian churches have also from time to time made attempts to prescribe what is right and what is wrong in arts. In more than five thousand years of history of Hinduism there have never been any attempts of similar nature.

The Trisutr expresses very well the essential nature of Hindu Dharm. In a way, Trivarg is not different from Trisutr. We shall however skip such aspects of the relationships between different foundation blocks of Hindu Dharm in this document.

G. Respecting the Learned

We could have used the word Brahmin instead of the Learned. Unfortunately, in the past thousand years Brahmin has started denoting a caste instead of people who devote their life to intellectual pursuits.

In the true sense and as prescribed in ancient Hindu texts, being a Brahmin is not easy. There are strict conditions that a person is compulsorily required to follow to be able to qualify as a Brahmin. For example, a Brahmin can not own land; a Brahmin can only do any of the following six sets of activities – read, teach, conduct yagy (also called yagn, by some), help conduct yagy, accept daan (alms) and give daan. A person can not qualify to be a Brahmin if he has not acquired a certain level of proficiency in some branch of knowledge. Above all, a person does not qualify to be a Brahmin if he can not control his desires and if he does not live a duly disciplined life.

It must be mentioned that a person does not need to be a Brahmin’s son / daughter to qualify as a Brahmin. All the greatest Hindu rishis (sages) were born to either non-Brahmin parents or were of mixed parentage. Ved Vyas, Vishwamitra, Valmiki are some names that come to mind immediately.
The texts also mention a clear hierarchy – rishi, muni and Brahmin. In ancient times, rishis were the ones who wrote the books of knowledge. They were the ones who lived in universities, imparted higher education and were involved in discovering and developing knowledge. Rishis were like the scientists and professors of modern world. Munis do not seem to have had such a direct role in knowledge discovery and development. Munis were surely people who lived in or around the universities and followed a life style which was no different from that of the rishis. Munis and rishis were expected to live a life free of negativities.

Rishis and Munis are also referred to as Brahmins. However, generally speaking, Brahmins represent a class that in ancient India had the duty of transmitting the knowledge of the Rishis to the masses. Brahmins were the teachers, physicians, law-givers and moral compass for the society. It may be said that knowledge flowed from Rishis to Munis to Brahmins to common people.

Hindu Dharm rests on the role played by the Brahmins in the true sense of the word and not in the sense of either priests or hereditary functionaries. Respect for the Brahmin is an essential foundation block of Hindu Dharm.

As Hinduism seeks to rise up as a global religion, it can do so only if a new class of Brahmins is raised up to lead the world through the morass it has fallen into in the last one or one and a half millennium. Simultaneously, a habit of respecting the learned has to be inculcated in every one. The present generation across the world has learnt to respect everything else – beauty, glamour, success, wealth, power etc. The new class of Brahmins can not be effective unless the people learn to respect knowledge and all those who discover it, preserve it and transmit it.

A few words of caution at this point are in order. While we seek to create and build a new intellectual class, we must not insult or disgrace the learned ones of the present-day – the professors, scientists, teachers, authors etc. The new Brahmins can not emerge out of vacuum; they will have to emerge only from the learned ones in the society today.

The important part to understand is that Brahmins will always debate and disagree on different points – that is the way of development of knowledge. A belief system that is based on satyam and shivam has to accept such debates and disagreements. The final decision in matters, where hard facts can be obtained as proof, will be based on evidence. However, in cases of moral dilemmas and key issues related to life-direction, the role of Brahmins is limited to that of acting as a guide. The final decision always rests with the individual who has to take his own decisions and also face the consequences that arise as a result of his actions.

At this point, it is necessary to put forth the concept of the Muni that lives in each individual's inner being. The Muni appears when an individual removes from his mind and heart all the negatives – Lobh (Greed), Krodh (Anger), Ahamkar, Maan, Abhimaan (Ego, Status, Conceit), Moh (Delusion), Pratishodh (Revenge), Eirshya.
(Jealousy), Bhay (Fear), Ghrina (Hatred). The Muni is the final arbiter of right and wrong.

So while a Hindu respects the Brahmin and seeks his guidance in all matters, the decision making rests with him and him alone. He is advised to listen to all the Brahmins and then submit the matter to the Muni who lives in his inner being. A Hindu must follow what the Muni tells him.

In essence, a Hindu must respect the learned ones, but there is no compulsion to blindly follow the advice given by the learned ones. Even a learned one may be wrong, but the Muni who lives in the inner being is never wrong and one must always follow him.

H. Dev Life

The concepts of Dev and Danav are central to Hinduism. Synonyms for the two words in Sanskrit are Sur and Asur; or Devta and Daity. The two words are wrongly translated into English as Gods and Demons. Such translations distort not just the meaning of the words but also the cultural context and philosophical paradigm in which the words are used.

Dev or Devta is someone who gives without any direct expectations in return. A dev becomes divine by his selflessness. Sun, moon, fire and water are devs. But the phenomenon of being a dev is not restricted merely to these natural bodies or forces. Every human being, as and when he or she, indulges in giving selflessly, acquires the property of being a dev (or devi, for women).

In contrast to the daivik (derived from dev) relationship, a danav is self-centered and tries to maximize what he can grab. A dev gives out of love, compassion and because giving is a pleasure. A danav does not derive any pleasure from giving. For him the pleasure is from acquiring or possessing. He gives only when he is forced to.

A mother is a devi because she gives love and care to her child. A wife may be a devi for her husband and a husband may be a dev for his wife. On the other hand, it is possible for a husband-wife relationship to be a danav-danavi relationship. In a sexual relationship between a danav and danavi, both are working on their own pleasure / value-maximization equation - each trying to give away as little as possible, while simultaneously trying to grab as much as possible. In a society of danavs, children are viewed as nuisance to be endured till they reach the legal age of maturity.
For a dev, every person is an opportunity to give. Children, in particular, are so lovable and caring for them (even after they attain majority) is pleasure that needs no justification.

Every human being has the potential to be a dev as well as to be a danav. The fact is that most of us become dev at some times and danav at other times. Conflict between being dev or danav is a perpetual war that goes on in the mind and heart of each one of us. To be a dev or to be a danav - that is a choice, which one faces at every step of one's life.

To qualify as a Hindu, a person must try to be a dev in every aspect of his or her life. A danav cannot be called a Hindu irrespective of his family, community, race, country etc. Ravan was son of a rishi. He was born in the community of Brahmins. Yet, due to his danav lifestyle and attitude, he was considered fit to be killed.

If one tries to be a dev in all the relationships, one is truly a Hindu. In contrast, a person who is born of Hindu parents; goes to temple every day and remembers a thousand verses in Sanskrit; but is trying to grab more and more of money, pleasures, material beings etc. by hook or crook from everyone without giving away anything cannot be called a Hindu.

I. Trividhan – The Three Fundamental Laws

Laws in science are distillation of the results of repeated observation. A law is assumed to be true by inductive logic. For example, one has only seen black crows so one derives a law that all crows are black. Philosophers of science often differentiate between universalizations that are non-laws and the ones that can take the status of laws. Without getting involved in the controversy of laws and non-laws, let us note that all scientific laws are supposed to be true by virtue of the fact that contradictory instances are either not known at all or are not known in the limited situations to which the law is generally applied.

It may be pointed out that scientific laws do not need to be reasonable or sensible or rational (whatever those terms mean). Some scientific laws can appear to be truly ridiculous. One is not permitted to ask how the phenomenon that the law describes takes place. The two questions that are clearly forbidden when one handles scientific laws are – How and Why.

Let us look at an example. Newton's law of universal gravitation states that every point mass in the universe attracts every other point mass with a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. In common man's language the law states that the
spoon on my dining table knows all the objects that are in your house irrespective of which part of the globe you live in. The spoon knows the distance to your kitchen and also knows whether you have kept the bottle of ketchup on the kitchen shelf or on the dining table. The spoon also knows whether the ketchup bottle is full or empty. And after all this great knowledge about every reader’s house, it performs the complex math of calculating the force by which to pull every single object in the universe. Wow! Surely the spoon on my dining table is more intelligent than me and is also probably more intelligent than all super-computers put together. How does the spoon do all this? Why does the spoon do this? No, despite all the advances in sub-atomic physics, one is not allowed to ask such questions. Is the law of gravity ridiculous? Probably, it is. Is it irrational? Depends on how you define rational and irrational. As mentioned earlier, rationality and ridiculousness are no considerations when studying laws. Let us keep this in mind when we study the Three Fundamental Laws.

It may be mentioned here that The Three Fundamental Laws are universal. They do not apply to Hindus alone. They relate to natural phenomenon. Laws of physics relate to only inanimate objects while Trividhan relate to the totality of cosmos along with human beings. Just as the law of gravity applies whether one believes in it or not, the Trividhan applies even if one does not believe in it.

Hindus believe in the Three Fundamental Laws even though it may not be stated by them in such explicit terms. Faith in Trividhan can be said to be an essential condition for being a Hindu.

Having stated the background on which Trividhan rests, let us look at the three fundamental laws.

**First law** – Universe is ONE and Man is part of the ONE.

The first law is the basis for a holistic thought process. The cosmos or the universe, which has no boundaries either in space or time, (called **Brahm**) is one whole being. The quality of oneness of the cosmos is a result of linkages between various parts of the whole being. The linkages or relationships between various parts may or may not be seen or understood by human beings. Inability of human beings to perceive or understand can not be a reason for denial of the relationship. For example, just because we cannot understand how light travels from sun to earth, we cannot deny that light travels from sun to earth.

Talking of relationships between various parts of the cosmos, we must understand that each part of the cosmos has a role in the schema of the universe. Role of any part is only with reference to the whole. No part has any importance or relevance independent of the overall schema of the whole. For example, every part of a tree has a certain assigned function. The moment a branch ceases to do the function that a branch is supposed to carry out, the tree sheds away the branch as dead wood.
Shedding away of dead wood is a natural phenomenon in every part of the cosmos – whether it be plant kingdom or human society.

A corollary of the first law is that a whole is more important than its part. The focus is therefore on preventing damage to the whole even at the cost of damage to any particular part. For example, if one’s leg gets injured and starts putrefying, the doctor will advise amputation of the leg. Even though it is not a happy development, one agrees to lose the leg to save the whole body. Similarly, if the need arises one should sacrifice an individual to save a family; should sacrifice a family to save a village; should sacrifice a village to save a state; and one should sacrifice a state to save a nation. This is a principle on which strong societies and communities are built.

In modern times, there has been a strong emphasis on individual’s rights, aspirations, dreams, desires and wishes. The way western society’s mainstream thought has been shaped, the purpose of society appears to be to cater to every whim and fancy of each individual irrespective of whether the whim or fancy will aid the social fabric or damage the society. This is exactly opposite of the message of the First Law of Trividhan.

The First Law of Trividhan has an implicit message to each individual to see one’s own self as a part of the various wholes to which one belongs. Each individual is a part of a family, a village (or town), a state, a country and the global community. One’s focus should not be oneself but the wholes to which one belongs. One should see one’s life as a part of a long unending journey where this life is just one small segment. The body that one is blessed with will be replaced with some other after some time. So, shedding away this body for the benefit of any of the wholes to which one belongs is a sacrifice that one should be willing to make happily.

An individual’s primary link with the cosmic whole is through the Muni that lives in each individual’s inner being. We discussed about this Muni earlier. In the process of being willing to sacrifice one’s body, wealth and physical possessions for the greater whole to which one belongs, one must give the ultimate respect to the Muni. One must obey the Muni even if one has to make sacrifices to do so.

**Second Law – Law of Karm - What you sow is what you reap.**

The Second Law is an offshoot of the First Law. Every action of an individual produces some effects (or triggers a chain of events) in the cosmic being. In the infinite space-time reality of cosmos the chain of events that an individual’s action triggers is too complex to be mapped.

The first underlying principle of Second Law is that no action is free of effects. Every human action is a seed that brings fruits some time in future. It may not be possible to predict the quantum of fruit that a seed will yield. It is also not possible to predict
the time at which the fruit will appear. Nevertheless, no one can deny the principle that if one sows oranges one can only reap oranges.

This principle when extended to human actions means that an individual who cheats will be paid back by the cosmos in the same coin, while one who acts out of love and kindness will receive love and kindness. It sounds very simple. But in real life there are various occasions when people tend to forget it.

Let us say that a man goes to buy vegetables from a vendor. The vegetables that he has bought are worth Rs. 35. He gives a Rs. 50 note to the vendor. There were many buyers on the shop. While catering to other customers, the vendor forgets that the man had given him a Rs. 50 note and starts thinking that the note was of Rs. 500. So, the vendor returns to the man Rs. 465 instead of Rs. 15. The man is happy with the extra cash that he has got. He knows that the vendor has made a mistake but decides to keep silent. He thinks that no one has seen him and therefore he can “act smart”.

The man forgets that he is a part of the cosmos (First Law) and that his action of keeping silent and pocketing the extra cash has triggered a chain of events in the cosmos. The chain of events and the resulting process will at some future time produce effects for him which will be of the same nature that his act was (Second Law). In other words, his act of cheating has been noted in the cosmic reality and he will receive the results of this act at some time. No one can predict what the effects will be for the man and when the effects will appear. But the fact that his action will bear fruits, and that too bitter fruits, cannot be denied.

This brings us to an important concept – DHRUTI. Dhruti can be understood as “carry-over”. It is like the balance in an account that one carries forward. One is born with an opening balance which also determines the parents to whom one is born. As one moves through life, one’s actions keep adding or subtracting to the dhruti. Someone with a strong dhruti will be able to achieve much more with the same efforts compared to someone with a weak dhruti. It is like when I go to bank and try to cash my cheque for Rs. One million the bank manager throws me out; but when another person does the same act the bank manager is too glad to oblige. The same effort (of signing and presenting a cheque) produces insult and injury for me while it produces cash for someone else. More or less, the same holds true in life too.

Law of Karm is often used by some to argue for a fatalistic view of life which says that whatever has to happen will happen and there is very little that a person can do. Nothing could be farther from truth. Success in any endeavor in life depends on five factors which can be summed up as follows:

✔ Dhruti – discussed above

✔ Dakshta – (Resources, Expertise and skills) One cannot do a job till one has the resources, knowledge, skills and expertise to carry out the job.
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- **Desh** – (Place) One cannot grow coconuts on North Pole. A tropical climate is more appropriate for growing coconuts. Similarly, one has to be near a water body if one wants to do fishing.

- **Kaal** – (Time) There is a time to sow and there is a time to reap – every farmer knows it. The same holds true in life.

- **Parakram** – (Efforts) Even though all the above factors are right one cannot achieve success unless one makes the efforts for it.

On one hand, Law of Karm is not fatalistic. On the other, the Law negates the Free Will Theory which states that a person is free to do everything that one wishes and only efforts can achieve success. Law of Karm takes a complex holistic view of human efforts and results. It is neither simplistic (like fatalism) nor extremist (like free will theories).

It may be added here that the Law of Karm applies not just to individuals but also to families, communities, societies and countries. Unfortunately, most present-day history text books take a myopic view of history missing out on the patterns of actions and effects that span a much larger time frame.

**Third Law** – The Divine Paradox - In a war between Dev and Danav, though apparently Dev might appear to be weaker, the ultimate victory will always be of Dev only.

The oneness of the universe discussed in First Law truly manifests itself in the operation of the Third Law. This is when a person can feel the cosmos acting with a will and a purpose.

Both sacred texts of Hinduism – Ramayan and Mahabharat – seek to bring forth the concept of The Divine Paradox.

To understand the Divine Paradox, one has to go back to the concepts of Dev and Danav. A dev keeps giving while a danav keeps gathering. So, common sense tells us that in a fight between the dev and the danav, the victory will go to the danav. Third Law tells us that the opposite will happen.

In Ramayan, Ram was moving around in forests with his brother and wife when his wife was abducted by Ravan. Ram had no army, no money and no kingdom. In contrast, Ravan was an imperial power drawing on resources from a very large land mass. Ravan had the world’s largest army. No one could have predicted that Ravan would lose to the man who had practically no resources to fight a war. This paradox is the essence of Ramayan.
Similarly in Mahabharat, Pandavs had lost their kingdom, had been through twelve years of forest life and had just spent a year incognito doing menial jobs. On the other hand were the Kauravs, who had the world's largest army at command. The fight between Pandavs and Kauravs seemed to be heavily tilted in favor of the Kauravs even halfway through the war. Events turned against the Kauravs after the nine days of war and in the next nine days Kauravs lost everything. The victory of the Pandavs illustrates the Third Law.

Faith in the Third Law does not have to stem only from Ramayan and Mahabharat. The Law is always true. There are times in one's life when one sees the dev side losing but one has to keep watching and in due course the dev wins. Surely, it is a bit unnerving when a dev (Ram or Yudhishitr) is seen to be suffering and the bad ones are enjoying a life of luxury. It is critical at such times to not lose faith in Trividhan and rest assured that the ultimate victory will belong to the dev alone.

It will not be inappropriate to say that the Third Law is an offshoot of the Second Law. While discussing the Second Law, we discussed about Dhruti and the five factors of success. The focus of a danav is to collect resources and skills (dakshta) by hook and crook without bothering about the negative dhruti acquired during the process. The dev carries with him a strong positive dhruti which ensures the cosmos adding its force and strength to the dev’s efforts. The hidden power of the positive dhruti ensures dev’s victory which appears almost paradoxical to one who sees only the external visible factors.

J. Trivarg – Dharm, Arth and Kaam

Of the five foundation blocks of Hindu thought, the one that touches human life most directly is Trivarg which deals with the motivation or reason of any action carried out by any individual. Hindu thought system does not prescribe do’s and don’ts in detailed specific terms. Decision about doing or not doing any specific act is left to the wisdom of the individual concerned. The individual is only guided about what should be his / her reasons for doing or not doing any specific act.

Hindu thought condemns some motivations while advising individuals to do actions based on Trivarg. There is a Negative List of reasons for human actions, while the positive list consists of only three categories called Trivarg. The Negative List typically represents a danav way of life. In any society where the danav way of life is glamorized, the Negative List ceases to have any negative connotations.

Let us look at the Negative List before we understand Trivarg.
**Lobh (Greed)** – Greed is defined as desiring more of something that one already has. One does not have a house and desires to have a house – this is not greed. But a person already has one and he desires two more – this is greed and is not justified.

**Krodh (Anger)** – One is never supposed to act out of anger, though anger can be used to help one gain some extra push when one is engaged in a war or war-like situation. All through the war in Lanka, Ram often gets angry. The anger is justified in this case since anger is not the primary purpose of the action of war.
Ahankar – The word that comes close to it in English is ego. Ahankar means the feeling of I being important. Ahankar is when a part starts feeling that it is not a part of the whole subject to the rules of the whole. It is when one sees oneself as the doer instead of seeing oneself as a tool or medium through whom the cosmos is acting.

Maan (Status) – The respect that others give to one is Maan. Surely, when one does good deeds one gets respect. The problem arises when one starts doing deeds with the purpose of getting respect. For example, it is not unusual to meet rich persons who are doing social service not for the purpose of helping some needy person but for getting good coverage in local newspapers. The motivation of such persons is only Maan or status. This obviously deserves all the condemnation.

Abhimaan (Conceit) – Often one starts thinking of oneself as superior to everyone else around. This feeling of superiority manifests itself in many ways. In business organizations, there are managers who think that everyone else is incompetent. There are political leaders who think that no other leader (or human being) measures up to them. This conceit can be a strong motivator, but is an avoidable one.

Moh – There is no equivalent word in English. Moh is a type of delusion, whether temporary or permanent. It arises from attachment, from possession and it seeks to possess. It is often confused with love. In this context it may be worthwhile to quote from another article by the author – “Love is giving while moh is holding and being held. Love gives and lets go, while moh gives with one hand and tries to tie up with the other. Love liberates while moh enslaves. Love has no expectations while moh is full of expectations. Love does not possess, moh is based on a sense of possession”.

Pratishodh (Revenge) – In Mahabharat, Draupadi, who had faced the insult of being stripped in public, wanted her five husbands to fight a war as an act of revenge. Krishn did not want a war based on revenge. He made sure that the war was for other reasons. In present day Western literature, it is not uncommon to hear that revenge is sweet. Novels and films describe in great detail the revenge that some man or woman took. It appears as if acting revengeful is the morally correct path for any man of honor. This is in sharp contrast to the theories of jurisprudence that are well accepted in western world. A wrong doer must be punished – there can be no doubt about that. However, the duty to punish rests with the state and not with the individual who has been wronged. Even in case when the state does not act for whatever reasons, in any civilized society, an individual is not supposed to avenge the wrong done.

Eirshya (Jealousy) – Neighbor’s house is larger than mine – this is not a justified cause for any action. This is a negative emotion that must be
suppressed. Sadly, in the present world commercial interests often stroke this emotion to sell more goods and services.

\textbf{Bhay (Fear)} – Fear makes one run away and also makes one do various acts. However, one should act without fear. Does that mean that if one faces a lion in a jungle one should not try to climb the nearest tree? Surely not! It is one’s dharm to protect one’s body from harm. Acting for dharm is always recommended. However, the disapproval of fear comes when one has to do a dharm and one fails to do it due to fear. For example, a soldier who hides in the trenches and refuses to look out for fear of being seen by the enemy is not acting as per his dharm due to fear. Going back to the earlier example of facing a lion – it is good to climb a tree to save one’s life but it is horrible if one gets so crippled by the fear of lion that one is unable to climb up a tree.
Having looked at the bad reasons, it is time we look at the three categories of good reasons, called Trivarg of Dharm, Arth and Kaam. The two rules with reference to Trivarg can be summed up as follows:

**Rule 1** – One must follow all three - Dharm, Arth and Kaam. Ignoring any of the three leads to loss of the other two also, leading to all round destruction of the individual concerned.

**Rule 2** – The order of priority must be Dharm (1\(^{st}\) priority), Arth (2\(^{nd}\) priority) and Kaam (3\(^{rd}\) priority).

With these rules in mind, let us try to understand the three elements of Trivarg – Dharm, Arth and Kaam.

**DHARM**

Dharm can be best understood as the obligation that falls upon one due to the existence of a relationship. It is not proper to use the term “duty” for dharm since duty connotes a burden, while dharm can often be a pleasure. For example, having sexual intercourse with one’s wife is a dharm for a married man – this dharm is surely a pleasure and will hardly fit into the narrow meaning of the word “duty”.

Dharm is what links one to everyone else and to the whole cosmos. Let us look at some examples of dharm.

- **Body (Deh)** – The first relationship that one has is to one’s own body. So, the first dharm one must fulfill is body-dharm (called deh-dharm in Sanskrit). Body-dharm includes food, water, sleep, sex etc.

- **Aptitude (Vritti)** – One is born with some vritti (aptitude / vocation). This does not mean that a person has necessarily the same vritti as one’s parents. A person may have vritti of a scholar even though no one in the family has ever been a scholar. There are obligations cast upon one by virtue of one’s vritti. A person with the aptitude of a scholar must spend his life in learning and teaching. Such a person with his sharp mind may take to stitching shoes but the activity will not satisfy him and he will either be unhappy or quit the activity soon enough.

- **Son / Daughter** – Every person is a son or a daughter. The obligations that one has to fulfill to one’s parents are a dharm for each individual.
Husband / Wife – The relationship of marriage is a special one in Hindu context. It is what makes two individuals one. The oneness casts obligations upon each of the two. The husband’s dharm becomes wife’s obligation and vice versa. Operating in the context of dev lifestyle, the dharm of the husband becomes more important to the wife than her own dharm. So, for a wife deh-dharm of the husband must take precedence over her own deh-dharm and vice versa. In specific terms, it has been advised that a wife must not eat till she has given food to her husband; and a husband must not eat till he has made sure that there is food for his wife, children and all those who are dependent on him. It is interesting to note that one great adharm (anti-dharm) that has been repeatedly mentioned is a man not having sexual intercourse with his wife when she is going through her fertile period and wishes to have intercourse.

Parent – Becoming a parent is surely one of the greatest pleasures in almost every culture and community across the world. Hindu texts mention that the best touch is touching one’s own son or daughter. Parenting is not a burden. It is a pleasure to see children grow and be a part of their growth. As a parent, one has obligations that are truly pleasurable for a person who has a dev mindset. These obligations are a parent’s dharm.

The above list is only illustrative and not exhaustive. One’s relationships to siblings, grandchildren, other family members, teachers, employer, colleagues, neighbors and friends also cast obligations upon one. Each of these obligations created by virtue of the relationship concerned is a dharm.

Often, there may be conflict between two dharmas. For example, it is a person’s dharm to take care of his body and one is required to sacrifice one’s life when the situation so arises in a war field. Such dilemmas between two conflicting obligations are challenges that every human being faces at various points of his life. Ram faced such a dilemma when his beloved brother Lakshman had fallen in the war-field and there seemed no hope of Lakshman’s revival. Ram even considered giving up his life if Lakshman did not recover. Ram was in a state of doubt whether he had followed the correct course in putting his brother at risk for the sake of his wife. This is a classic case of conflict between dharm to one’s brother and to one’s wife.

Many of us face similar dilemmas in less dramatic situations. For example, the issue of work-family balance can be seen as the issue of deciding between the dharm to one’s family and to one’s employer.

ARTH

The word arth refers to all types of resources including material, human, animal, land etc. Examples of material resources include house, grains, foodstuff, vehicles, furniture, equipment, clothing, jewels, ornaments, money in the bank, cash in hand, etc. Human resources include son(s), unmarried daughter(s), wife (wives), younger
brother(s), soldier(s), servant(s), and even friends. Animal resources include cattle, horses, elephants and other domestic animals.

It is important to understand the comprehensive view of arth in Hindu thought. Present-day western thought often tends to be focused on money to the exclusion of everything else. In contrast, Hindu thought treats a man who has tons of gold but no family as a poor man.

A person must take care of all his resources (arth); must make efforts to acquire more of arth; and lastly must ensure that all his arth are deployed for Trivarg as per the two rules mentioned earlier. It may be mentioned here that efforts to acquire more arth must be in line with boundaries imposed by dharm. Above all the efforts to acquire more arth must not be based on any of the items on the Negative List discussed earlier.

Arth is said to be dependent on Dharm and also that Dharm is dependent on Arth. Generally speaking, one who takes care of all his dharm sooner or later acquires good amount of arth. Of course, it must be emphasized that all the three elements of Trivarg are highly inter-dependent.

**KAAM**

*Kaam* literally means desire. Very often, in common usage, the word refers to erotic desire. But in its true sense, it refers to all types of desires including erotic. Some examples of kaam are as follows:

- Wearing gold ornaments
- Wearing nice clothes
- Embracing one’s beloved
- Eating tasty food
- Listening to nice music
- Seeing a beautiful painting
- Enjoying a dance

Kaam essentially refers to all pleasures and desires connected with pleasures. Kaam is something that one experiences. It is not particular to any specific part of the body.
Aesthetics is dependent on kaam. Beauty has meaning for someone who experiences kaam. All arts will cease to have any effect on someone who cannot experience kaam.

Kaam is an essential part of human existence. It is the intoxication of kaam that enables human beings to indulge in sexual intercourse which is the basis for all procreation and therefore human life.

Kaam is dependent on dharm and arth. But, in a way dharm is also dependent on kaam. A person who ignores kaam completely will ruin his dharm and hence his arth too.

It must be stressed that kaam must receive the last priority after dharm and arth. Kaam must also be within the limits imposed by dharm and arth. Going on a vacation to see the beautiful sights of some foreign land is a satisfaction of my kaam. One should do it only if one has no other obligations and if one has the resources for it. Moreover, it is advisable that one takes care of dharm and arth while satisfying the aesthetic feelings. So taking one’s family and friends along is surely better than going all alone. And if one’s bank balance does not permit the whole family to go or if there are some friends who cannot afford to go for such an expensive vacation, cancelling the vacation may be the true dharm.
K. Examples of Application of Trivarg in Life

It was mentioned earlier that Trivarg touches human life most directly. In fact there is no aspect of human life that is untouched by Trivarg. Understanding to apply Trivarg to every moment of one’s life is an essential part of becoming a Hindu and also to making one’s life more fulfilling, enjoyable, healthy, peaceful and prosperous. Let us take a few examples to understand the practical application of Trivarg.

Food (including beverages)

Food is essential for life. It is a part of one’s deh-dharm (dharm towards one’s body) to have food and beverages at regular intervals. Body sends signals of its need for food and drinks by hunger and thirst. While one satisfies hunger and thirst, one must choose food and beverages that contribute positively to the well-being of one’s body. Simultaneously, the food that one consumes must also be such that it helps the mind grow in a direction that is in line with one’s vritti (aptitude / vocation). The two considerations – deh-dharm and vritti-dharm – obviously must get top priority in deciding one’s food.

The second priority, while choosing food, surely has to be regarding the availability and cost. Local resources, which are cheap and available in abundance, must be preferred over equivalent expensive ones imported from over seas. This is the Arth aspect of food.

Food, in addition to being useful and inexpensive, should also be tasty and attractive in appearance. This is the Kaam aspect.

The theory of Trivarg tells us that Dharm must receive priority over Arth and Arth over Kaam. In other words, one should consume a food if it is beneficial for one’s body and / or mind even though one does not like its taste. In the western world, the focus is in reverse order. Taste, flavor and appearance receive so much attention that one forgets about every other aspect. Expensive foods like oysters, caviar, truffle, foie gras and rare wines are declared to be desirable by the western
civilization even though the benefits of these for one’s body are either negative or doubtful.

The fact that food and beverages contribute to one’s mental development is unknown in western world. In Hindu traditions, some foods were prohibited for scholars while the same foods were recommended for warriors. People who devoted their life to intellectual pursuits were advised to shun meat, fish and alcoholic beverages while these were considered an essential part of a warrior’s food. It may be mentioned here that the violence involved in killing animals is not a consideration for advising some categories of people to keep away from meat. The issue is only vritti-dharm and nothing else. Hindu thought, contrary to what some so-called Hindu leaders might say, does not advise vegetarianism, except for some selected vocations.

Hindu texts advise not just about what to eat, but also when to eat, with whom to eat and whose food to accept and whose food to reject. In all countries, communities and cultures, food is useful for building relationships. This aspect of food received extensive attention from Hindu rishis. Discussing all aspects related to food from Hindu ideological perspective will need a voluminous treatise. For the time being, let us just mention a few principles based on Trivarg (and other elements of Hindu thought) related to food.

a) **Deh/Vritti Dharm** – One should eat food that is beneficial for one’s body and mind. The decision about beneficial qualities has to be based on one’s age, health, vritti (aptitude / vocation), upbringing as well as on the weather and time of the day. For deciding on this, one should take guidance from the learned ones as well as from the accumulated experiences of one’s community.

b) **Other Dharm(s)** – Generally speaking, one should eat only with people whom one loves. Except in an emergency, one should only eat food offered by a person with whom one has a relationship of love and affection. Before eating, one must make sure that everyone else in the house has adequate to eat. All decisions regarding food should be such as to build and strengthen one’s relationships with the people who are a part of one’s life and who make one’s life complete.
c) **Arth** – One must eat what one’s resources permit. This does not extend to only what an individual’s pocket can afford. One has to keep in mind the resources of the loved one who is offering one food. If my brother is poor and can only give me dry bread, chilies and water, I must not demand anything else.

d) **Kaam** – This includes taste and beautiful appearance of food and beverages. Kaam should be considered but only after Dharm and Arth have been duly taken care of.

**Sexual Relationships**

No one-book religion takes such an open matter-of-fact view of sexual relationships as Hinduism does. Sexual attraction is accepted as a reality that one does not need to be ashamed of. For a Hindu, sex is not a sin. However, Hinduism abhors the concept of free sex.

Sexual attraction is a form of Kaam. As discussed earlier, kaam must be subordinate to dharm. So, kaam removed from dharm is not acceptable. In other words, if a boy and a girl are attracted to each other sexually, firstly the relationship should be such that it does not interfere with the dharm of either of the two. For example, if the boy and girl are siblings their sexual attraction cannot be permitted and will be severely criticized. If no such restrictions are present, the kaam-based relationship between the two is acceptable but it must simultaneously and quickly move into one encompassing all three elements of trivarg. One can say that a kaam based relationship is encouraged to become a marriage.

At this point it is important to understand the difference between one-religion concept of marriage and Hindu marriage. In Christianity and in the western world, marriage is a license granted by either the Church or by the State to a couple to engage in sex. In Islam, a marriage is a contract. In Hinduism, marriage is a unification of two individuals. The act of unification needs no permission from any authority. In ancient Indian history, there is a story of Dushyant and Shakuntala. The two met, fell in love in a jungle and a few months later Shakuntala gave birth to a beautiful healthy son called Bharat. There was no priest and even no witness to their coming together. Yet, their alliance is considered a sacred marriage.

From Hindu perspective, the moment a boy and a girl come together and share a moment of mutual sexual attraction, the two are married. At this point, the Trivarg of the two individuals converge. It becomes the dharm of the husband to take care of deh dharm (body dharm – food, sleep, sexual intercourse etc.) of the wife and vice versa. The wife is a resource for the husband and the husband is a resource for the wife. The two share all resources – money, land, houses, animals, and even each other’s body.
Hinduism does not accept a kaam-based relationship that does not extend to dharm and arth. A one-night stand is condemned and reprimanded in the harshest terms. The linkage must involve all three elements of trivarg and should be based on dev lifestyle and must not be danavi.

**Furniture**

In designing any product, the debate of functionality versus aesthetics is an important one. One can buy furniture that is extremely beautiful but very uncomfortable to use and has a short life. On the other hand, there is furniture that is functional, very comfortable, lasts long but is neither fashionable nor trendy nor sexy. Viewed from the perspective of trivarg, this is a debate of whether dharm should be given priority or kaam should receive priority. From Hindu perspective, functionality (dharm) must get priority over economics (arth) and both should get higher consideration compared to aesthetics (kaam). In present-day world, unfortunately the opposite holds true. People throw away their functional tough old furniture to buy the latest fashion.

**Clothing**

Clothing is a typical example where functionality is often thrown to the winds and fashion / aesthetics / titillation become the driving considerations. Hinduism, unlike one-book religions, does not condemn display of flesh but is critical when dharm
takes the back seat and kaam becomes the key criterion. Hindu rishis saw clothes as an important factor for building identity of a person and also for defining interpersonal relationships. When a man meets a woman, there can be many possibilities of non-kaam relationships such as brother-sister, son-mother, colleague, etc. All non-kaam relationships between man-woman are based on dharm and/or arth. Clothes that ignore the possibilities of such relationships and stress only the sexual aspect of the woman are obviously harmful to dharm and arth. They are also harmful to the status of women in society. They treat women as objects of sex and not as complete human beings with whom one may link on all three planes – dharm, arth and kaam.

The photograph above is typical of western social norms. A woman is expected to dress up like a doll and attract sexual attraction of men, while men dress up conservatively in business suits. This treatment of women is not acceptable to Hindu thought.

To understand Hindu perspective on clothing, it is interesting to look at three different views:- (1) Christianity believes that human body is full of sin and hence must be hidden (2) Islam has a similar (though not identical) view. In Islam’s viewpoint, uncovered body of a woman is like open meat that dogs are bound to jump upon (3) Western modern (so-called) view treats exposure of woman’s body as her liberation, though strangely men do not get liberated by jumping out of their clothes.

Hindu thought neither sees any sin in human body nor sees it as meat in a butcher’s shop nor sees it as a path of liberation. Exposure when required for dharm is accepted while exposure for the purpose of titillation of one and all is condemned. For example, it is not unusual to see rural Hindu women breastfeeding their children in public places. While feeding the child if a woman’s breast gets exposed there is no hue and cry about it. She is doing a noble act and the exposure is not for seducing anyone. So there is no criticism for such exposure. On the other hand, if a woman dresses up in a manner that accentuates and displays her cleavage, the elders in a traditional family will advise her to avoid such dresses. In the former case the action is as a result of doing her dharma while in the latter case she is trying to attract kaam-based attention to herself from men who are not permitted by dharm to enjoy kaam with her. Obviously, the latter deserves condemnation while the former is appreciated and protected.

**Trees**

Nothing distinguishes a place where Hindus live as much as the trees at the place do. Hinduism treats all fruit-bearing trees and some shade-providing trees as sacred. The sacredness of these trees arises from their dev nature. These trees are beneficial to humanity.
Under the influence of western thought, it has become common to plant decorative
trees and herbs on public lands and also in personal gardens. A decorative tree or
plant appeals to one’s aesthetic sense or kaam. While a tree that gives fruits or
shade or medicinal benefits contributes to the well-being of the whole society.
Obviously, it is dharm to plant and take care of such a dev tree. One must give
priority to dharm over kaam. Hence, planting of dev trees (as against decorative
trees) has been adopted by Hindus for centuries.

It is interesting to mention here a practice that has been followed all over India and
probably even in some other countries. Owner of the land on which a fruit bearing
tree stands has no right on the fruit that falls to the ground. Anyone can pick up the
fallen fruit. The land-owner considers it a sin to deprive passers-by of fallen fruit.
That is dharm of the landowner towards the one who is passing by his farm.
One finds mentioned in Hindu texts that when dharm gets damaged in a society, the landowners become so greedy that they start picking up even the fallen fruit. Sadly, things have got even worse than that. Now, government authorities, educational institutions and even temples do not plant fruit bearing trees. They plant royal palms. What a shame!

**Non-erotic Man-Woman Relationships**

Every man / boy has large number of non-erotic relationships with different women / girls – mother, sister, daughter, son’s wife, brother’s wife, teacher’s wife etc. Each of these relationships must strictly have no component of kaam. The relationship must be completely dharm and arth based.

Hindu thought lays great stress on such man-woman relationships remaining free of kaam. Any man who approaches either mother or sister or daughter or son’s wife or brother’s wife or teacher’s wife with an intention of kaam is viewed as no better than an animal, with no human rights or dignity or protection of law.

It is interesting to note that the worst abuses (swear-words) in all Indian languages are the ones that allege a man’s sexual relationship with his sister or mother or daughter. It can be said that the swear-words have an educational purpose – to convey the message that a person who has sex in a non-erotic relationship is the worst possible type of creature.

On the positive side, there are festivals that celebrate non-erotic man-woman relationships which are considered sacred since they are based on dharm.

**Hunting of Golden Deer by Ram**

Sita saw a golden deer in the forest and asked Ram to get it. In her own opinion, this was a case of *kaam*. Sita acknowledged that she was sending Ram on a mission inspired by *kaam* and also said that it was not the best of reasons for a wife to send a husband for some act.

Ram differed from Sita. He was of the opinion that killing the deer and getting its lovely golden skin was an act of arth.

At this point Lakshman argued that the deer was in fact a demon and there was a danger in Ram’s going after the deer. Ram accepted Lakshman’s concerns and said that if indeed the golden deer was a demon, his going in pursuit of the demon became an act of dharm.
The above example illustrates the three aspects of trivarg in one situation and also the complexity that may often be involved.

**Arts & Literature**

All arts (Painting, Sculpture, Music, Dance, Drama, Films, etc.) and literature appeal to a person's aesthetic sense and, hence, aim to provide kaam satisfaction to a person. Hinduism accepts all arts and literature since it accepts kaam as an essential part of life.

However, arts and literature, in addition to providing kaam satisfaction, inspire a person to some way of life or some values. Any art or literature that incites a person to do actions based on the Negative List (Lobh, Krodh, Ahankar, Maan, Abhimaan, Moh, Pratishodh, Eirshya, Bhay and Ghrina) cannot be allowed. The argument that every artist must be free to do anything and everything, irrespective of the effect his work has on society, is not acceptable.

The purpose of all art and literature should be to inspire people to follow the trivarg, to have faith in trividhan, to live dev style of life, to respect the learned and to develop one's knowledge based on trisutr. The dharm of an artist or poet or writer is to inspire and lead people on the right path. An artist or poet or writer who does otherwise deserves to be condemned.
L.  **God – One-book Religions versus Hinduism**

Islam and Christianity largely share their concept of God (Allah for Muslims). The concept of God in Islam and Christianity is not very different, except for the idea of trinity. Both religions are essentially dualist. They believe in an invisible, omnipotent God who has created the world and has also sent a chosen messenger (prophet or son) for the benefit of mankind. God as the creator is distinct from the prophet or son sent by Him as well as from the world created by Him. The prophet acts as a link between the Creator and the created.

Monotheism is a characteristic of both Islam and Christianity. The concept of trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) has been the subject of much debate in Christianity. There is a view that the concept of trinity was not a part of the original Christianity but was adopted later under pagan influence.

Both, Islam and Christianity, accept the notion of a God, which is not anthropomorphic and is in heaven rather than on earth. Islamic conception of God is more clear and unambiguous while there is significant divergence of views among various Christian theologians about the concept of God.

The following account makes the concept of Allah (God) abundantly clear:

“Allah is the personal name of the One true God. Nothing else can be called Allah. The term has no plural or gender. This shows its uniqueness when compared with the word god which can be made plural, gods, or feminine, goddess. It is interesting to notice that Allah is the personal name of God in Aramaic, the language of Jesus and a sister language of Arabic. The One true God is a reflection of the unique concept that Islam associates with God. To a Muslim, Allah is the Almighty, Creator and Sustainer of the universe, Who is similar to nothing and nothing is comparable to Him.”

(http://www.islam101.com/dawah/02_concept_God.html)

The Christian Concept of God can be summed up by the following characteristics:

a) **Omnipotent**, having unlimited power.

b) **Omniscient**, having infinite awareness

c) As the **Creator** of all that exists

d) As **benevolent and forgiving**, rather than vengeful. This is the main tenet of Christian faith. The first three characteristics stemmed from the beliefs of the Hebrew culture and are also present in Islamic concept of God. However, the Islamic God (ALLAH) is more judgmental than forgiving. Confession and repentance of a sin does not make it pardonable in the
eyes of Allah. On the other hand for Christian God, confession and repentance is sufficient and no further atonement is required.

While almost all sects of Christianity would accept the above, there are serious differences of opinion beyond the above basics. Nevertheless, all schools of Christianity believe in the dualist concept of God as distinct from the world, of a schism between the Creator and the created.

In opposition to this developed a Judaistic and popular conception of God which leaned to the anthropomorphic and which felt obliged to connect with all realities (and thus also with God) the idea of a tangible substance.

The above image sums up the one-book religions’ concept of God as distinct from the world and controlling the world, though, of course, depiction of God (Allah) as a human being is not acceptable to Muslims and to most Christians. The existence of an Almighty as distinct and separate from the world is something that all one-book religions accept.

In contrast with the dualistic view of one-book religions, Hinduism is monistic. The schism between God and the world is not acceptable to Hindu thought.

The development of the principle of Brahm is a unique feature of the Hindu thought. Brahm, a gender-neutral term denotes the cosmic reality of which all devs like Agni, Vayu, Marut, Indra etc. are merely forms or names. This concept of Brahm is an abstract concept that is not defined in positive terms in the Vedas. It is defined only as “Not this; Not even this”. In other words, Brahm is not this and not even this but it is all that is. Vedas also say, “The Brahm is one, the learned call it by various names”.

This concept of a Brahm, of which the world and all gods are merely forms, is the foundation of monism in Hindu thought. Hindu looks for the unity in the diversity of forms and shapes all around in nature. One worships each dev as Supreme with full realization that the said dev is only a facet or form of the Brahm. To understand this complex abstraction, an example is often given. A king called four blind men and asked each one of them to touch and feel an elephant. One described the elephant as a round pillar. The other who had touched the tail described it as a rope. The elephant was one but the impression of each blind person was different. Similarly, each dev is a facet of the Brahm.

A modern example will illustrate the point better. A car has many parts such as wheels, bonnet, seats, doors, door-handle, engine, carburetor, petrol tank, steering, suspension springs etc. Each part of the car is car. One can put one's hand on the seat of the car and say that it is car. That is true only partially. The seat, by itself removed from the rest of the parts, is not car. Similarly each part is car when seen in conjunction with the rest, but is not car when removed from the whole. The word car is used for all the parts together. But if one were to collect all the parts and put them into a big box, one would not get a car. One needs to assemble the car using a set of rules and procedures. Without such an assembly, the parts do not become qualified to be called a car. Even after the assembly is complete, a modern car has to go through a process of image building through advertisements in print and electronic media. Image or brand of the car is as much a part of the car as the seat or steering is. Viewed in this manner, it may appear to some that “car” is an abstract complex concept. Though, in reality car is not an abstract concept but is a real thing that we can see, feel and operate.

A car is a finite entity, whose totality can be comprehended easily by human mind. In contrast, universe or cosmos is infinite in space as well as in time. It has no beginning and has no end either spatially or temporally. If comprehending holistically a finite thing like a car poses problems, the comprehension of the infinite cosmos is indeed difficult.

Hindu rishis realized that common people are not likely to be interested or even capable of comprehending the cosmos holistically. So, while on one hand some decided to look at Brahm as a shapeless, formless (nirgun) entity, others gave the Brahm different forms, shapes and identities. It is important to underline the fact that all such forms, shapes and identities are manifestations of Brahm and are not the Brahm in its totality.

Apparently, it seems that Hinduism has many gods and deities. The reality is that in Hindu schema of things, the Brahm or cosmic reality, which is undisputable one and only one, manifests himself through infinite forms – human, animate, non-animate including trees, stones, idols etc. As we saw in the example of car as a totality, every part of the car is as much car as any other part. Similarly, every part of the cosmos is a manifestation of the totality of the cosmos.
It has also to be accepted that human beings need an anthropomorphic God for attachment at an emotive plane, for psychological support in times of crisis or in other words for (what is referred to as) the religious experience. There are many such anthropomorphic Gods in Hindu religious texts. However, it must be understood that each such anthropomorphic God is only a form of the Brahm.

Talking of anthropomorphic manifestations of Brahm, the first and foremost of such manifestation takes place through the Holy Trinity of Hinduism – Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh are three facets of the cosmic being or Brahm. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu takes care and Mahesh destroys what needs to be destroyed. However, it must be mentioned that even though the personalities of the three are distinctly different they are linked to each other. In Hindu mythology, one is mentioned as the father of the other. This complex interrelationship between the three arises because the three are one.

The Holy Trinity represents the Brahm or the cosmos in its entirety. Each person who acts in a dev fashion can look up to either one or all three of them to seek help when going gets tough. The Brahm or the Holy Trinity or either of the Holy Trinity helps out every Dev when the situation so demands. This is in essence the Third Fundamental Law of Trividhan.
It is also important to mention at this stage that each person who acts as a Dev is considered as a manifestation of the Brahm and is considered fit to be worshipped. Let us discuss the concept of worship and prayer in Hinduism in the next section.

Before we move to prayers and worship, for the sake of completeness it may be mentioned that even in Christianity there is a mystical school of thought (and probably Pantheistic too) that considers God almost in the same manner as Hindu monistic thought. One may refer in this context to St. Augustine, the most significant name in Western Theology. St. Augustine talks in his book *The City of God* about the classical triad of virtues - truth, beauty, and goodness (*satyam*, *shivam* and *sundaram*).

**M. Prayer and Worship**

There is an essential difference between worshipping as per one-book religions and as per Hindu system. A believer of any one-book religion can worship only the Allah / God who lives in heaven. All prayers of the believer must be addressed to the said God / Allah and never to anyone else. The prayers must take the form as ordained by the prophet and as given in the Holy Book. In Christianity, the prayers must be routed through the proper channel of the Church and the prophet. In Islam, the prayers are not routed through the clergy but the clergy has a right to decide on various other things depending on which sect of Islam one belongs to. Any direct communication or befriending of the Allah or God is strictly forbidden in all one-book religions and may even be punishable by death.

In contrast, a Hindu treats the Almighty as his / her friend, mother, father and even beloved. One can dance with the Almighty. One can even fight with Him just as the way one does with a close friend. One can even claim to be a son or daughter of the Almighty. All this will be considered as the worst form of blasphemy in all one-book religions.

For a Hindu, the Almighty or Brahm is all around and is not someone living up there in a heaven. A Hindu has the option of worshipping any form or manifestation of Brahm. Generally speaking the form of Brahm that one chooses to worship is identical to what one wants to be. For example, a warrior worships a deity that is well-armed; on the other hand, the business community likes to worship the Brahm either in the form of a child or in the form of a woman who is well-decorated with gold and jewels. The deity may be represented by a stone idol or by a printed poster. However, what is well understood is that the devotee worships a form of the cosmic being and the idol or the poster is only a representation or symbol. This fine difference must be understood by people who do not know Hinduism and accuse it of being idol-worshipper.
At this point, it may also be pointed out that the freedom that a Hindu has in choosing his deity or the form that he wishes to worship is immense. Every village and every community can have its own deity. There are forms of the cosmic being that might appear very strange to people who do not understand Hinduism. For example, Bhairav or Bhairon is a dev which has a dog as its vehicle. In Ujjain, a sacred town of Hindus, Bhairav is supposed to be the watchman (kshetrapal). Surely, a watchman can make good use of a dog.

We have discussed earlier that every dev or one who gives is a form of the Brahm. Surely, every dev deserves to be worshipped as much as any deity. Hence, a Hindu worships Sun, Moon, rivers, dev trees, father, mother, and everyone else who appears to him to be a dev. A Hindu child is taught to worship his text books. In India a carpenter will not start work on a new work table till he has worshipped it (this practice is followed even by Muslims). Hindu workers worship their tools once in a year. Hindu builders worship the land before starting construction. This practice of worshipping inanimate objects and animate beings to whom one is grateful is common to all pagan religions. It shows the common philosophical ground on which Hinduism stands with pagan religions of the world.
It is interesting to refer to a verse from Mahabharat at this point. In this verse (Sabha Parv / Arghabhiharan Parv/ 36/23-24) Bhishm instructs Yudhishitr about the six categories of persons who should be worshipped and given an offering if they come to one’s house after a gap of one year or more. The six categories are as follows:

a) Teacher
b) Priest
c) Relative
d) Learned Person
e) Dear friend
f) King

It may be pointed out that some of the persons whom one worships may in fact be younger to oneself. For example, it is customary for a family to worship the family’s son who returns home after a long time. Similarly, a daughter-in-law (or son-in-law) is worshipped by her mother-in-law when she enters the home for the first time. The worship of any individual need not be an elaborate affair. Its form may vary from community to community. The important part is to understand the sentiment behind such worship.

The worship of an individual conveys many messages. The most important is to recognize that the worshipped person is a dev (or a giver) for the worshipper. In one’s capacity as dev one need not give anything material; one may only give love or affection or good wishes. The worshipped by accepting the offerings agrees to act as a dev and do his / her dharma as a dev should. The act of worshipping and giving offerings builds a relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped which is
founded on dev principles of love and sacrifice instead of the danav principles of selfishness and strife.

As the worshipped person acts like a dev, he / she becomes a manifestation of the Brahm. The worshipper during the act of worship and offering establishes a link to the Brahm thereby activating the part of his / her own self which is dev. The purpose of all worship is to move closer to becoming dev oneself. We shall discuss this in some more detail a bit later.

In the meanwhile, it may be pointed out that one must worship only a dev and never a danav. The six categories of persons worthy of worship mentioned above must be dev to qualify for being worshipped. A few minutes after Bhishm had instructed (as in the verse mentioned above), Krishn killed Shishupal instead of worshipping him even though Shishupal was Krishn’s relative.

Coming back to worship and prayer in Hinduism, the key is to understand that a Hindu must always strive to align himself or herself with the cosmos or Brahm in every action and at every moment of his / her life. The purpose of worship or prayer is to ensure that one does not digress from the path.

Prayers, remembering the Almighty and worship of one / many / all manifestations of the Brahm must be with the purpose of (a) ensuring that one’s mind does not move away from the path of trivarg – dharm, arth and kaam (b) one does not do anything under the influence of the Negative List (c) One’s faith in the Trividhan remains firm (d) One continues to be a dev irrespective of the pain and suffering that it might apparently involve and (e) One continues to seek guidance from the learned ones and does not become a conceited egoist.

Prayer and worship are essentially means to help one to remain on the right path. One can pray and ask for all that one wishes. However, a good person should exercise extreme caution when asking for blessings. In Srimad Valmikiy Ramayan as well as Mahabharat, one notices that many of the ones who do not follow dharm spend immense amount of time praying and seeking favors of either Brahma or Mahesh. They seek unusual powers from Brahma or Mahesh. The powers are granted to them. After getting the powers, they misuse them. The cosmos has to act to undo the damage that is done by the misuse of the powers. This leads to severe punishment for the ones who prayed. In essence, both the sacred Hindu epics teach us that prayers, worship and devotion are no substitute for deeds that are not in line with trivarg principles. Prayers and worship that are motivated by the Negative List (greed, anger etc.) bring more harm than good to the worshipper just as they brought for Ravan, Indrajit, Karn etc. The same can also be said about visiting holy places, taking bath in holy rivers and singing devotional songs.
If prayers and worship are conducted with good objectives, one can worship any form or deity or individual. Of course, one may not worship at all as long as one lives a life which is in keeping with the basic principles of Hinduism discussed earlier. The freedom is truly unimaginable for a believer of any one-book religion. Hindus can be seen praying at tombs of Muslim saints across India. A Hindu can even pray to Jesus Christ or Gautam Buddha. Hindus see no problem in worshipping either of these great men because they are seen as much a manifestation of the cosmic being as any other deity.

A popular deity across India is Hanuman. Hanuman is an incarnation of Mahesh. Hanuman is said to grant the wishes of the worshipper very quickly. Hanuman is also considered the most powerful. Given his immense power and a tendency to grant boons to anyone who prays to him, people from all strata of society pray to Hanuman. It is not unusual for a person praying to Hanuman to submit a long wish-list. One can hear stories from millions about how their wishes came true.
Without commenting on the instances of wishes being fulfilled or not fulfilled, let us look at an instance that deserves to be mentioned in the context of our discussion about what all one can pray for.

Hanuman is said to be the son of Pawan (air / wind). In Mahabharat, Bheem is also the son of Pawan. In this way, Hanuman and Bheem are brothers. Bheem and his brothers were moving around in forest after being cheated and insulted by Duryodhan etc. Bheem was very upset and was waiting for the end of twelve year period of forest living and one year of incognito living. At this point, Bheem happened to meet Hanuman. Meeting his younger brother for the first time and seeing his sad situation, Hanuman became emotional. Hanuman told Bheem that he had the powers to do all that one can ever wish. Hanuman said that he could get for Bheem any kingdom; could get any or all persons killed and could do anything that one can imagine. Having thrown such obvious hints, Hanuman asked his younger brother to ask for a boon. Bheem could have surely asked for Duryodhan and company killed. Bheem could have also asked for the return of the kingdom that they had lost to the dirty ways of Duryodhan and company. Instead, Bheem said that he did not want anything unless he got it by his own efforts. Bheem said that he knew that such benefits (received as a boon) are short-lived and harm the receiver. Bheem asked Hanuman to bless him that whenever Bheem indulged in any endeavor the full force of Hanuman backed up the efforts of Bheem. This way Bheem ensured that the full force of cosmos backed up his efforts. Surely, success cannot elude a person who has the strength of the cosmos backing him.

This has to be the guiding principle when we seek blessings in our prayers. Before ending this section, let me look at what Goswami Tulsidas asked for in the prayer to Hanuman in his famous verse – Hanuman Chalisa.

The positive blessings that are sought are as follows:

- **Bal (Strength)** – This includes strength of all types – physical, mental, material
Budhi (Wisdom) – An ability to discern the difference between right and wrong or in other words, what constitutes dharma and what does not.

Vidya (Knowledge) – Knowledge is what gives one the skills and expertise to make efforts for any aim in life.

After seeking the above three positives, the prayer asks for removal of two negatives (a) klesh can be defined as discord in relationships and (b) vikar or distortions that arise from the Negative List discussed earlier.

Is there anything else that one can ever seek? Surely not!

Let no one who understands the fundamentals of Hinduism ever pray to seek anything else! Let no one pray except to align oneself to the cosmos! Let us worship the Dev in each one of us! Let us worship and pray without greed to seek a good life, a life where everyone around is a dev! Let us pray so that we never stray away from the path of dharma!

Of course, if you disagree with me and wish to pray with some other objectives (for example, if you wish to pray for getting a big car), you are surely free to do so. What transpires between the cosmic being and you is entirely a private affair between the two of you. The cosmic being may grant you all that you ask for. However, please be sure that even the cosmic being cannot cross the limits set by fundamental laws of nature.

N. Moving Forward Together – The Four Pitfalls

Worship and prayer prevent an individual from falling into the pitfalls of Negative list. However, there are pitfalls that are faced by societies or communities as they move collectively. As the world moves into a Global Hindu Renaissance, there is a need to watch out for these danger spots. Let us look at each of the pitfalls one by one.

One Book

The pitfall of One Book means anything that constraints the mind to what is contained in one or two or more books. It can also mean restricting the follower to only one author or to only those authors who agree with that one author.

Christianity did not have a holy book for at least three hundred years of its existence. One is not sure whether Jesus Christ would have agreed with the acceptance of two
holy books as the guiding principle for Christians. Surely, Jesus did not feel the need to write a Bible. He preached. One does not know how much of his good words have been included in the Bible. There is no evidence to indicate that Jesus recommended the acceptance of Old Testament. The New Testament or Four Gospels became an accepted book after many texts were burnt or otherwise destroyed. The process of burning or destroying texts is surely not something that Jesus would have countenanced.

Christianity is not the only religion where the leaders of the religion have constrained the followers to only one book. We have seen a similar phenomenon in Sikhism, a religion which is less than five centuries old. Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, refers to Ram and Krishn at innumerable places. Naturally, one would have expected Sikhs to be reading Ramayan and Mahabharat (stories of Ram and Krishn) with as much devotion and enthusiasm as Guru Granth Sahib. Sadly, as Sikhism has moved on the path to become a one-book religion, Sikhs have shunned reading Ramayan and Mahabharat.

Within Hinduism, there are many cults and communities which have declared some book or the other to be the one and only one that they follow. Some of these cults are so strongly fanatical about their own one-book(s) that they attack anything outside their own one-book(s).

The problem with one-bookisms is that they restrict the mind from seeing the truth beyond the way it is explained in the holy book. Hinduism does not accept any such constraints on mind. Let the flag-bearers of Hinduism be aware that the pitfall of one-bookism is not something that is confined to Judaic religions only.

Arya Samaj, a Hindu revivalist movement, suffered because of its strong insistence on acceptance of the writings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati as holy. Arya Samaj rejected idol worship so strongly that it became a narrow cult and lost touch with the mainstream of Hindu society.

Many organizations claiming to represent and organize Hindus have each their own holy book. No one can criticize the holy book and hope to remain within the organization.

The reason for mentioning about such so-called holy books is to illustrate the process of start of one-bookism. Whenever a book or author becomes the binding force for a group of people, there is a tendency to declare the book or author to be holy or an object of faith and belief. This is the start of the process of closing minds and accepting the writings blindly. The process can take place in any group or community.

Each of the so-called holy books may have some gems of wisdom that one may benefit from. A Hindu is not against the book, but is against the mindset that treats any book or author as holy and as fountainhead of all knowledge.
Clergy

Clergy refers to a hierarchically organized body of men and / or women who have some well-defined duties and enjoy special authorities by virtue of their position. Almost all sects of Christianity have their own strong clergies, while Islam and Judaism claim to have no clergy. Buddhism also has a strong clergy.

The clergy, of any religion, has a tendency to interpret the tenets of the religion for its own benefit. The clergy, like any other organization of men (women have rarely played much role in clergy) becomes an institution of power.

Much of blood stained history of Christianity was influenced by the desire of the clergy to increase its power. Proselytizing became an essential part of Christianity not because of Jesus but because the Church wanted to (and still wants to) grow.

Surely, clergy plays an important role in bringing the followers together. However, the useful part is soon overshadowed by the agenda of power that clergy adopts. Early Christianity did not have a clergy. The growth of a male dominated clergy which stressed on celibacy to the point of becoming misogynist was a later day phenomenon.

At this point, it must be mentioned that there are organizations that claim to be Hindu but imitate a Christian Church in all respects. The cadre of full-timers of such organizations is no different from Christian clergy. The only difference is that these full-timers have no religious authority. However, within the organizations the full-timers enjoy an authority that is not unlike that of deacons, priests and bishops in Catholic Church. The full-timers enjoy their authority not by virtue of any personal capabilities but only by reason of the position held by them within the hierarchy. This leads to elaborate games of intrigue, sycophancy and power play among the full-timers. One can meet an insider from any such organization concerned and hear juicy stories.

Of course, one cannot say that all full-timers are bad. To the contrary, most of them are highly devoted, committed and capable persons. The problem is not with the individuals. The problem is any clergy in any denomination.

Global Hindu Renaissance must avoid clergy by whatever name called. The underlying concept of clergy is that authority or status or respectability can stem from position as against capabilities or strengths. This must be discarded and opposed in the strongest possible terms.
Congregation / Sangh / Sangat

Congregation refers to assembly of followers or believers or worshippers. Sangh and Sangat are usually the words used in Sanskrit, Hindi and other Indian languages for congregation.

While there can be no objection to people with common perspective on life coming together, the problem arises when the assembly starts believing that by virtue of numbers they can declare what is true and what is false. The problem also starts when the congregation assumes powers and becomes an instrument of controlling the members of the congregation.

Any assembly of people has a tendency to become a crowd. A crowd is moved by mass hysteria. It sees no reason. Every member of a crowd enjoys the power of the collective and loses the ability or strength to oppose a collective decision. This makes a crowd mindless – moved by the most base instincts.

Religions which allow the collective body of believers to take decisions sooner or later fall prey to ochlocracy (rule by the mob). Tribal assemblies are classic examples of such ochocracies. Most political parties, across the world, are ochocracies manipulated by a few individuals who know how to stir up the passions of the mob.

Some so-called Hindu organizations who imitate Catholic Church often cite an aphorism from some Hindu text – Sanghe Shakti Kalyuge. They interpret the aphorism to mean that power lies in organization. While doing this interpretation, they ignore the third word (kalyuge) of the aphorism. The real meaning of the phrase is – In bad times, organizations or assemblies acquire strength. This has to be read with the well-known dictum – Satyamev Jayate or Truth alone will win. Viewed in this context, the real meaning of Sanghe Shakti Kalyuge is that in bad times organizations get power but the ultimate victory is of truth and not of organizations.

A true Hindu must follow the path of truth which can be summed up as follows – believe in trisutr and trividhan, respect the learned, and be a dev while following trivarg. Anyone who becomes a slave of an assembly and surrenders his / her good sense to the mind of the crowd or to the leader of the crowd has moved away from the path of truth. Such a person cannot surely be a true Hindu.

The Cult Guru

It is important to differentiate between a Guru and a Cult Guru. A guru or a teacher is a dev who gives knowledge without expecting anything in return. In contrast, a cult guru gives knowledge with the intention to possess the learner. A guru liberates while a cult guru seeks to enslave.
Let us look at the example from Mahabharat. Guru Dronacharya was a guru of Pandavs. Yet, he did not stop the Pandavs from fighting against him in the war. In fact, when before the war, Pandavs came to him to seek his blessings, he blessed them to be victorious.

Compare the behavior of Guru Dronacharya with many saffron-robed so-called holy men or god-men who aspire for the status of guru in present world. USA has a large number of such saffron clad men and women roaming around and trying to collect disciples who can help them collect riches and luxuries. Even in India, religion has become a big business thanks to such so-called holy men and women who use the power of media to build glamour and to amass wealth.

Let us be cautious of such false gurus! They are a danger to Hinduism as well as to Global Hindu Renaissance.

O. Friends and Foes

Hinduism is a global religion with no foes except the forces who seek to enslave mankind. The mindset of all one-book religions is the only enemy that Hinduism must fight.

Every single thinker who has contributed to liberation of human mind from the clutches of one-bookisms has to be respected. Hindus must respect Voltaire and Nietzsche along with all those who have stood up for free thought anywhere in the world. Let us remember the words that Voltaire wrote in February 1778, a few months before his death - "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition". These are words by a true Hindu.
Thanks to great thinkers like Voltaire, the iron-grip of Christian Churches on European and American mind has considerably weakened. Most of the so-called Christians in Europe and America may go to a Church for special occasions but they do not let key decisions of their life to be governed by any Church.

Hinduism needs to address these so-called Christians. Hindus must tell them that Hinduism is not opposed to Jesus Christ. Most of them have already liberated themselves from the Church and the Bible. Hinduism provides them the freedom to continue worshipping Jesus and God the way they have always done while adopting Hindu philosophical framework for taking key decisions of their life.

It is important to assert that Hindus do not seek to convert or impose. There is no attempt to even liberate. Each individual must walk the path of liberation oneself. Hinduism and learned men and women of Hindu thought should only be glad to offer assistance and guidance on the path of liberation seeking nothing in return.

Simultaneously, it must be pointed out that the Hindu path is not a path of complete freedom from all bonds. Each individual is born as part of a family, a society and the cosmos. Hinduism teaches one to be a better part of the wholes to which one belongs. Anyone who propounds yadrichhawad or do-all-that-pleases-you must be countered with all force. Yadrichhawad must be treated as an enemy no less than the mindset of one-book religions.

While Hindus must counter and oppose Yadrichhawad and one-bookisms, it is necessary to not lose the message of love and compassion for one and all. Let us aspire to make friends, to make brothers, to make sisters and to love even those who do not think like the way we do.

We do not wish to change anyone unless one wishes to do so. We do not wish to impose our rituals and practices on anyone. Of course, if one wishes to seek and understand one’s own religious practices – lost and buried by hundreds of years of oppression of some one-bookism – we shall be glad to act as a friend. Hinduism sees itself as a friend of all pagan religions.
P. Bon Voyage

The journey of Global Hindu Renaissance is not a political movement. It is not an attempt to gain power over some individuals or communities or nations.

Hindu Renaissance is a major transition point in history. It is the end of kali-yug – the thousand year period of human history when machines become supreme and dharm weakens. We are fortunate to be living at a time when the change of epoch has just begun.

However, there is also a challenge for all of us living through this transition phase of human history. We have to be the flag-bearers of the change. We have to start the spark that will brighten up the whole world. The sun that will illuminate the world has to first rise in our hearts.

Hindu Renaissance is first of all an individual journey. While Christianity has its Church, Islam has its mosques and Jews have their synagogues, Hinduism lives in the hearts of Hindus. Let each one of us discover the Muni who lives in one’s heart and appears when all the negativities of anger, greed, conceit etc. are removed. Let us be guided by the learned ones while we keep listening and obeying the voice of the Muni in our hearts.

This is a long journey that will be as much internal as external. The path is clear - get over the negativities, become a dev and follow the path of dharm, arth and kaam. Anyone who walks on this path will surely be rewarded with peace, love, prosperity and happiness. The person who walks this path will have the support of the Cosmic Being and all the forces of the Cosmic Being in all their manifestations. Let there be no doubt about this.

Best wishes to all those who have decided to move on this path! They are the chosen angels of the Cosmic Being who will bring new light to the world and will end the pain and suffering of the past one thousand years.

Anil Chawla
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ANIL CHAWLA is an engineer and lawyer by qualification but a philosopher by vocation. He is advocate, strategic advisor and management consultant by profession.

To read other works of the author, please visit www.samarthbharat.com

To get a glimpse of how the author earns his bread and butter, please visit
www.indialegalhelp.com  
www.hindustanstudies.com

In case you wish to write to the author, please write at the following address:
Anil Chawla  
MF-104, Ajay Tower,  
E5/1 (Commercial), Arera Colony,  
BHOPAL – 462 016 (MP) INDIA  
E-mail: samarthbharatparty@gmail.com

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