CHAPTER: 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Statement of Problem
1.3 Definition of Terms
1.4 Objectives of the Study
1.5 Area of Research
1.6 Importance of the Study
1.7 Limitations of the Study
1.8 Chapterisation
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS:

1.1 Introduction:

Religion is the lighthouse for human being. If we observe our daily routine, we can find that most of our activities are revolving around the religion. While a common man opens his eyes from the sleeping and gets consciousness, he wants to find a picture or idols of god or guru. Some Hindu does ‘Vanadan’ first ‘Dharati’ deity and then put his foot on the ground. After brushing and bath common man does worship his god or deity or ‘Kuldevi’ and take his breakfast. Then his life will start and do other activities. He also tries to get the blessing of his god, while he goes to his office or any journey. He always tries to get well wishes from his god, while he will be starting a new project of his life. It may be social, economic, political or religious or any field. Not only for a good deed, but also negative deed also started from the blessing of god. Even while a thief goes to his thieves, he does worship and put his first step with a good ‘Shukan.’ And after success, he also offered ‘Prasad’ to his god. Means religion plays a vital role in the life of a human being and it has a great importance.

Ritual and religion are two sides of the one coin. Yet rituals are characterized by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism and performance. While traditional festivals are observed by the adherents of the traditional religion to mark important social and cultural events in the lives of the people. They are culminated in a series of performances, entertainments, rites and rituals. Through these festivals, the values and beliefs of the people are demonstrated; they give meaning to the social, political and religious life of the people celebrating them. It is functioning by the religion.

While we add social and ethical values of our culture or Hindu religion, it is not the brightest image of the twentieth century. On one hand, there are numbers of people who are living in dirty Chawl or they have no home and other hand, there are numbers of temples and Ashrams which are increasing in acre and acre. Which types of India are emerging? On one side
the numbers of people living in poverty and the temples are over-flooded of money and golden jewels. 1‘The World Bank estimated in 2012 that 32.7 percent of Indians lived below the international poverty line of less than US $ (Dollar) 1.25 per day (PPP).’

2‘As per the Global Slavery Index, 2013, India is standing at the fourth position.’ It is not the ideal structure of our society, culture and democracy. Stronger become stronger and weaker become weaker.

In a village, a caste is generally rated as higher or lower on the basis of the ritual rank it occupies. It is the common belief3 ‘that particular caste ascribes for every individual Hindu his status... which is ranked relative to other caste ascribed statuses in a regional or India-wide system’ (Silverberg, 1959:149). 4‘The patterns of interaction between the members of different castes are governed largely by the fact of their ritual status. The vertical structure of the village community thus contains many castes which enjoy different statuses and constitute a ritual hierarchy.’” (Yogesh Atal, 1979:125)

**Religion and Social inequality:**

It is believed that the role of religion is conserving religious practices. In Indian content, the four varn system of Hindu religion becomes a source of inequality. 5 While Navsarjan’s study found 99 forms of untouchability by collecting data from 1589 villages (The Times of India, July 19, 2013, p.6). Untouchability is still prevailing in Gujarat. There are too much incidents of atrocities against Scheduled Castes in India. The base of those incidents was mostly religious beliefs and ritual related. There was not even allowing the ‘Varghodo’ (procession) of the Scheduled Castes in the main street of the village. It may be either marriage or religious. As, for example, recently 6 the villagers had attacked on the ‘Varghodo’ of the Scheduled Caste members in

---

1The Global Slavery Index, 2013, p.44, http://www.walkfreefoundation.org/resources/
2Ibid, p.6.
5The Times of India, July 19, 2013, p.6.
village Kudol, of the Aravali district. Even it was organized by the informing administrative authority and got the security of police. (Gujarat Samachar: July 27, 2014). The SCs that occupied the lower position in the traditional caste hierarchy and they are denied some fundamental rights still today.

The social structure of Gujarat is also based on the traditional caste system, which gets sanction from the Hindu rituals. The people of the Scheduled Castes are not allowed to sit on a horse and they cannot permit for passing of Jan (Varghodo or procession) from the dominant street of the village. They are attacked by the dominant castes, if they have not followed the conservative beliefs of caste system. The police employees are not free from the prejudice of caste system. 7The Thangadh police fired and shot three members of the Scheduled Castes in Thangadh. (Padakar News, Gujarati weekly, September 23, 2013, p.4)

‘The Times of India (Ahmedabad), Dalit sarpanch skips flag hoisting’ (The Times of India, January 28, 2016, p.4). The sarpanch of a Nortol village in Mehasana district has not allowed hoisting the national flag in the School. Yet the Scheduled Castes family is migrated from their native place due to the discrimination and atrocity. 8According to Gujarati news paper Gujarat Samachar, about 10 to 12 families of the Dalits (Scheduled Castes) were migrated in last five years. (Gujarat Samachar, June 26, 2016)

There are a number of incidents of atrocity against have been registered. It gives the proof of rigid castism. It must be accepted that caste-prejudices is prevailed today in its traditional form. Through been living in the age of the technology, the caste-system is still prevailing. It seems like it weakened, but it is not true. The problem of the caste-discrimination in Indian society is an inherent component of the structure of the society. It holds totally in all behavior of our daily life. We can see its roots in our basic rituals and daily traditional activities. 9Marriott and Gould (P. K. Mishra: p. 311) also have stressed that ritual service as an important criterion of caste ranking in their independent studies in the north and south Indian villages respectively.

---

7Padakar News (Gujarati weekly), September 23, 2013, p.4.
8Gujarat Samachar, June 26, 2016.
The researcher also wanted to check the role of Hindu ritual in the process of empowering of the Scheduled Castes.

But the politics of vote-bank and impacts of the globalization, some members of the Scheduled Castes, get some authoritarian place and their economical conditions are improved. And several members of the Scheduled Castes also get fruits of education. So they are enjoying limited rights of democracy in the urban area only. It is the best hope of the empowerment, but why the religion which known as a unity in diversities in the world is not given equal status to the Scheduled Castes. As per the Global Slavery Report 2013, ‘Poverty and India’s caste-system are significant contributing factors to its modern slavery problem. Indians most vulnerable to modern slavery are those from the ‘lower’ castes (Dalits), and the indigenous communities (Adivasis), especially women and children.’ So, the researcher has chosen a subject of weaker-section for research. Hence the central aim of the research is to find out the relationship between the Hindu rituals and empowerment of the Scheduled Castes.

Yet this research has been a sociological examination of the relationship between Hindu ritual and Empowerment of the Scheduled Castes, with reference to the institution of the caste-system. It is true that freedom, equality and all fundamental rights to private property relate to one another; such that they are all potentially consistent in some degree, but to the extent that any of them is realizing the others will be restricted. Their relation with the ritual is not denied and this relation is privileged to such a community and it also restricts such a community like the Scheduled Caste in such a way that they cannot get opportunities of the empowerment.

As a social researcher one cannot possess any type of prejudice and do research work scientifically. As per researcher’s assumption, rituals and festivals are important celebrations in every human society which bring together people from all walks of life of one group. But it must be accepted that they also strengthen the caste-system. Perhaps the gates of some temples are opened for the Scheduled Castes, but he never allows, sitting at the time of Yagna, as a participant. Traditional festivals are observed by the adherents of

---

10 The Global Slavery Index, 2013, p.8, http://www.walkfreefoundation.org/resources/
the traditional religion to mark important social and cultural events in the lives of the people, and these are culminated in a series of performances, entertainments, rites and rituals. Through these festivals, the values and beliefs of the people are demonstrated; they give meaning to the social, political and religious life of the people celebrating them.

**Importance of religion:**

Not only in India, but also in the world, religion is the essence of the human life and most of the human activities are directed by it directly or indirectly. Even the earliest societies have religious symbols and ceremonies. One can see in the excavation of the greatest civilizations of the world. Some seals of deity and the gods were also found from the site of the Harappan civilization. There was also found a proof of religion ceremony in the form of greatest bath. If we chose the early period or modern period of time, religion has been continued to be a central part of every society and human experiences. Religions can also shaping how individuals react to the environments in which they live. The significance of religion is not avoidable in the life of human from his whole journey i.e. from the birth to death. Even one can say that the impact of religion is started from before birth and not ends after death. Hence rituals are an important part of the religion and; social and other relations are influenced by the religion. Even social and other relations are displayed by ritual and its hierarchical forms also get authenticity from the religion. Not only such social relations are conformed, but also strengthened by ritual.

1.2 **Statement of Problem.**

Having elaborated this importance of the religion, it is very interesting to find out what are the impacts of it on the common behavior of people of Hinduism. Most of the important decisions of the life are taken by the either so called upper castes or the dominant castes. There is neither participation nor value of the Scheduled Castes. Even being a part of the Hinduism, they are totally excluded. There is not any importance of the voice of the depressed classes. There are also limits on interaction and behavior between the so called the upper castes and the Scheduled Castes. There is selected interaction among the people of different social status. The higher the status of the ritual
automatically gives power of such decision. There is not necessary dominancy or the numbers. The status of the ritual is direct giving power of such decision. So it must understand the relationship of the Hindu ritual with the empowerment of the Scheduled Caste. The study of this relationship will be useful for the implementation of the various schemes and programmes for the empowerment of the Scheduled Castes.

11As per the World Bank’s Sourcebook on Empowerment and Poverty Reduction, the empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one’s life.’ (Site resources.worldbank, p.v) Means ‘Empowerment is the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make choices and transform these into desired actions and outcomes.’ So, ritual attitudes to the Scheduled Caste are becoming more important and it must be studied by the social scientists. 12Nicholas B. Dirks (1994) stressed that ‘Social relations are displayed and renewed and hierarchical forms underlying social relations conformed and strengthened by ritual.’ There are numbers of atrocity of social-discrimination against the Scheduled Caste giving direct proof of their social exclusion. So, the ground reality of the traditions of the Hinduism towards the Scheduled Caste must be examined.

Hence, the empowerment is a dynamic process which cannot be observed directly. So it can be measured approximated through the use of proxies and indicators. The indicators used to measure global dimensions of empowerment are very different than those applied in a Western context. It is too much different in India due to the caste system which is driving wheel of life of a member of the Hindu society. Most of the social scientists believe that the empowerment should be measured with multi dimensions like material, social or institutional, cognitive, psychological, relational etc. But what is the base of all these dimensions? We know that the religion plays as a driving wheel in the life of a human being. Hence the Caste system is the backbone of Indian society and it is sanctioned by the Hinduism. There is not enough representation of the Scheduled Castes in the institutions like political, social,
media, etc. But, we can find it in few numbers. The measurement of the Empowerment of the Scheduled Castes is not easy, it cannot find directly. It was hidden in the behavior, beliefs, practices and prejudices of the people of Hinduism. So, it is not easy to measure, but use of the both methods of research, qualitative and quantitative we can measure it in some extent. First, there will be requirement of identifying such variables and with the help of it we can measure Hindu rituals and Empowerment of the Scheduled Castes.

Since the democratic constitution the Scheduled Castes have been tasted some fruits of the fundamental rights and Directive Principles. So, the Scheduled Castes got an education and became aware of the need. They have been struggling for liberty, equality, fraternity and freedom of the opportunities for the development. Hence it is true that the Scheduled Castes have no control over natural resources and social, economical, religious institutes and even they cannot get proper representation among them. The Scheduled Castes are still facing the discrimination and number of atrocities continued against them. ¹³ According to Gujarati news paper Gujarat Samachar, about ten Sarapanch of the Scheduled Castes complained that they were not enjoying their power and facing the discrimination; to the Chief Minister. (Gujarat Samachar, May 28, 2016.) As per the constitution article seventeen, untouchability is abolished, but it is observed that the numbers of cases of untouchability are registered still today. The Scheduled Castes have to struggle for their equal rights, values, and dignity of human beings. Yet, they cannot get equal status and if they would be trying for it, they would become victims of social boycott. The Gujarat state has experienced the anti-reservation movement against the Scheduled castes in the year 1981 and 1985. However, they were attacked by the non-Scheduled Castes in the anti-reservation movement. In the new economic policy, they are also marginalized by the contract system and the self-finance education system. Not only the theories of the materialism and individualism spread by the new economic policy, but castism also prevailed in India. The Scheduled Castes are facing a threat to their existence in the continuous dual process of the modern capitalism and traditional castism. This study is important to throw the light on

¹³Gujarat Samachar, May 28, 2016.
the empowerment of the Scheduled Castes. It will help to know the roots of
the pathway of the empowerment of the Scheduled Castes. It will also find the
role of the rituals in the life of the Scheduled castes.

**Title of the Research subject:**

‘Hindu Ritual and Empowerment of the Scheduled Castes: A sociological
study’

1.3 **Definition of Terms:**

The primary knowledge of the terms of the related subject is very
necessary. Religion, Hindu Ritual, Empowerment and the Scheduled Castes
are important terms of the research. Let us try to understand their meaning and
definitions.

1.3.1 **Meaning and definition of Religion:**

As a social, institutional religion plays a dynamic role in every society. Any
human being practices religion to find out such basic answers, which are
related to the meaning of life, relationship between God and man and life after
death. It is an integral part of all societies of the world. Societies depend on
religion to provide meaning to life, provide answers to questions of life after
death as well as emotional, and psychological support.

From the Latin religio (respect for what is sacred) and religare (to bind, in the
sense of an obligation), the term ‘religion’ describes various systems of belief
and practice concerning what people determine to be sacred and profane.’
(Openstax: p.338).

What is religion? It is a very difficult task to give universal accepted
definition. There was not either uniformity among the sociologists or various
religion authorities. There was debate in the media about statesmen of the
Shankaracharya of Dwarka pith. He told that Saibaba is not God, so Hindu
must not worship Saibaba. As for example, the title of the one article of the
outlook magazine was 14’Sai Baba was not a god or a saint, he should not be
worshipped?’ (The Outlook: September 15, 2014). In this type of debate, the

14’Sai Baba was not a god or a saint, he should not be worshipped?’,
http://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/sai-baba-was-not-a-god-or-a-saint-he-
should-not-be-worshipped/291884, September15, 2014.
interest of the social researcher is only that how religion or related matter is defined. What is the impact of these statements of religious authority in the Hindu followers? Or what is the impact of these types of statement on the followers of Saibaba? What are the experiences and emotions of the follower of the Saibaba felt after these statements? It is not an easy task to explain or define religion. But in India, there is distinguishing between religion and Dharm. There are many approaches to the religion.

1.3.2 Definition of Dharm/ Dharma:

Dharm/Dharma has not a singular meaning. The following are several meanings of it.

1) Dharm implies Religion, duty and, righteousness:

Dharma is word without direct translation, but implies ‘religion’, ‘duty’ and, ‘righteousness.’ It derives from a Sanskrit root word meaning ‘to uphold’ or sustain. The concept behind the Dharma is anything that upholds or sustains a positive order. An individual, a family, a community, a nation, and the universe all help uphold order.” (study.com).

2) Sadharan Dharma and Svadharma:

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, there are also Sadharan Dharma and svadharma. The Dharma that applies to everyone (sadharana Dharma)-consisting of truthfulness, non-injury, and generosity, among other virtues.

There is also a specific Dharma (svadharma) to be followed according to one’s class, status, and station in life. Dharma constitutes the subject matter of the Dharma-sutras, religious manuals that are the earliest source of Hindu law and in the course of time has been extended into lengthy compilations of law, the Dharma-Shastra.” Example: ‘Dharma’ of fire is to burn.

3) Four Ends of Life:

17“Dharma is also a part of a doctrine of ‘Purusharthas’ in Hinduism. Initially the Hinduism ‘had three ‘Purusharthas’ (trivarga) - Dharma, Eartha and Kama. Moksha was added later on.” (International Journal of Religious Thoughts: 2012)

18“In Hinduism, Dharma is the religious and moral law governing individual conduct and is one of the four ends of life.” (Britannica.com)

Generally, Purusharths means objectives of man. Here ‘Purusa’ means human being and ‘Artha’ means object or objectives. According to the Hindu way of life, a man should strive to achieve four chief objectives (purusharths) in his life. The following are the four ends of life with its meaning.

1) Dharma means righteousness,
2) Artha means Material Wealth,
3) Karma means Desire and
4) Moksha means Salvation.

In short by, 19 ‘Dharm, Hindu means ‘right duty, law’ and also religious custom and usage.’ (Pandey: p.7, 1987)

Sacred and Profane:

Every religion is characterized by the distinction between the sacred and profane. Hence the sacred and the profane terms are complex and their universal definition is not possible, but they are used to describe religions, myth, and ritual. The distinction between the sacred and profane is not varied only as per culture or group, but also as per status of individual or class. As per example, the sacred and the profane object of Hindu and Muslim is different. Same way, according to Manusmruti, to get an education is a sacred duty for Brahmin; hence for Shudra and Outcaste, it is not only profane but also strictly punishable. The sacred and profane are two poles of every religion. These two poles are the power of rituals or practices that the dynamic relationship between the two poles becomes possible.

As per “Encyclopedia Britannica, three further characteristics are generally used to specify the ritual action beyond that of the dichotomy of sacred and profane thought and action.

The first characteristic is a feeling or emotion of respect, awe, fascination, or dread in relation to the sacred. (2) The second characteristic of ritual involves its dependence upon a belief system that is usually expressed in the language of myth. (3) The third characteristics of ritual action is that it is symbolic in relation to its reference. Agreement on these characteristics can be found in most descriptions of the functions of ritual.”

However, Durkheim and others enforced that ritual is determined mode of action. According to Durkheim, ‘the reference, or object, of ritual is the belief system of a society, which is constituted by a classification of everything into the two realms of the sacred and profane. This classification is taken as a universal feature of religion.” (ritual-Functions of ritual Britannica.com: 2013)

Belief systems, myths, and the like, are viewed as expressions of the nature of the sacred realm in which ritual becomes the determined conduct of the individual in a society expressing a relation to the sacred and the profane. The sacred is that aspect of a community’s beliefs, myths, and sacred objects that is set to apart and forbidden. The function of ritual in the community is that of providing the proper rules for action in the realm of the sacred as well as supplying a bridge for passing into the realm of the profane.”(Ritual-Functions of ritual Britannica.com: 2013)

1.3.3 Meanings and Definition of Ritual:

Generally, it is accepted that the ritual consists of symbolic actions that represent religious meanings. The following are some definitions of ritual.

1) Anthony Wallace (1966) argues that ‘ritual is the primary aspect of religion and, indeed, that ritual is religion in action. (Teenu Nandal: p. 22)

2) Dr. Joseph Fort Newton believes that ‘Ritual is the dramatization of belief, hope and spiritual dream. It assists imagination by giving form to

22 Nandal, Teenu.‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health.’
what otherwise would remain formless, presenting vivid mental images which lend a reality-feeling for what is often abstract and unreal. It is picture philosophy, truth visualized, at once expressing and confirming the faiths and visions of the mind.” (Teenu Nandal: p.22)

(3) 24‘Rituals are marking the symbolic transition from one social position to another’ (Glossary, Sociology: A Brief Introduction: Richard T. Schaefer, De Paul University).

(4) 25‘A ritual is a formalized mode of behaviour in which the members of a group or community regularly engage. Religion represents one of the main contexts in which rituals are practiced, but the scope of ritual behaviour extends well beyond religion. Most groups have ritual practices of any kind’ (Ritual.html from sociology.about.com).

(5) According to Wilson (1971), ‘'ritual is limited to the symbolic enactment of relationships between man and what is conceived of as transcendent reality.' (Teenu Nandal: p.22)

(6) 26Ritual as an element of religion refers to religious acts, ceremonial practices and customs that are geared towards the worship of the sacred. Religious rituals are a way of venerating and honoring the sacred. Ritual reaffirms the total commitment of adherents and also reinforces their belief in the sacredness of the object being worshiped. Rituals constitute practical avenues where members demonstrate their strong religious belief. Normally, religious rituals require the observance of certain special types of behavior such as prayers, offering of sacrifices, observance of the feast, meditations and the wearing of particular clothes (Eddie Floyd: 2003)’ (Sociology of Religion: Noun: p. 34)

23 Ibid.
26 Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health.’
Conclusion of the meanings of rituals:

From the above definitions, the meaning of rituals is concluded...Ritual is described as an embodiment of a presupposed set of attitudinal stances, demarcated by social convention. It is a set of actions and performed for their symbolic value and prescribed by the traditions of a group or community. Ritual practices between the divine and humans, which is the primary aspect of religion and, indeed, that ritual is religion in action.

Rituals are ceremonies of birth, death, marriage, initiation, healing, harvest, or religious observance are found in all known cultures, and appear to have been performed for thousands of years. They speak to people’s core emotions and reveal the values that a society holds dearest. Because their expression is conventional and obligatory, they join the individual in solidarity with the group. Rituals bear an obvious relationship to norms and can even be conceived of as forms of names. Ritual is a form of human action in which the profane is trying to obtain the power of the sacred.

1.3.3.1 The Categories of Rituals:

In ‘Cultural Anthropology: A Perspective on the Human Condition, Emily Shultz and Robert Lavenda (en.Wikibooks) showed the categories of ritual. According to them, 28 a ritual must fit into four categories.’ They described the following categories:

‘(1) It must be repetitive social practice, (2) It must be set off from the routines of day to day life, (3) It must follow some sort of ritual schema, and it must be encoded in myth, (4) A ritual often has its roots in myth and religion, tying itself to ancient practices between the divine and humans.’

1.3.3.2 The Elements of Ritual:

What are the elements of ritual? As mentioned in the thesis of Teenu Nandal, 29‘Rituals, both personal and communal, may include many different parts. The following is a simple formula of elements to help in the creation of rituals:

(1) The invoking or calling upon the sacred to be present.

---


29 Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health’
This can take the form of a song, a formal prayer, or a gesture, such as lighting a candle or burning incense. The invocation creates the field of energy into which all are drawn.

(2) The action of the ritual deals with the reason why the community is gathered together, or why the ritual is being done. This part may include any or all of the following: readings from sacred texts, poems, or writings of the group members, music and songs, dance and symbolic gestures, a prayer of petition, asking for the benefit of the community, a communion with food or a commitment of the community.” (Teenu Nandal: p.29, 30)

1.3.3.3 The Features of Ritual:

Every society and religion have their rituals. There may be a chance of differences in a performance, although possessing structurally similarity. Elements and their features are united in the same pattern. Hence the following are the features of Rituals which are derived from the above definitions:

1) The ritual consists of all symbolic actions, activity, pattern that represents religious meanings.
2) The word ritual is an activity which has some meaning and that is repeated over and over again.
3) Ritual is a repeated action or activity over and over again.
4) Ritual reveals the values that a society holds dearest.
5) Rituals are prescribed by the traditions of a group or community.
6) Ritual is the primary aspect of religion and, indeed, that ritual is religion in action.
7) Ritual is universal in all religion or society.
8) Ritual speaks to people’s core emotions, reveal the values that a society holds dearest.
9) Ritual is related to sacred and profane.
10) Ritual is limited to the symbolic enactment of relationships between man and what is conceived of as transcendental reality.
11) Rituals are prescribed by the traditions of a group or community.
12) Ritual practices between the divine and humans.
13) Rituals bear an obvious relationship to norms and can even be conceived of as forms of norms.

In her thesis, Teenu Nandal (p. 30, 31) had given a reference of Xunzi and mentioned the features of ritual.

“According to ‘Xunzi, ritual has the following seven features:

1) Ritual is a social practice. (As opposed to behavior involving only one person):

In the social practice, ritual is not only interaction between the livings; it also includes the mean interaction between the living and the dead. The classical examples of ‘Rituals are a social practice’ are Hindu Rituals. The samskars of Hinduism are related not only about life, but it also includes the samskars related dead; as for example ‘Antesthi Samskars.’

The performing of Hindu rituals is called Dharm. And the idea of ‘Dharm’ in classical Hinduism refers especially to a person's responsibility. This responsibility is well defined and described in scriptures. In Hinduism (Hindu rituals), the Dham means responsibility with respect to his/their class (Varna) and stage of life (Ashram). This theatrical and practical code of conducts is called Varnashrama-Dharma. And their standard books or scriptures, which sanctioned the rules Varnashrama-Dharma is known as Dharmasashtra. Manusmruti is a doctrine or main source of Varnashrama-Dharma. Yet, the so called upper caste including some scholars believed that Varnashrama is the ideal social order. Even Gandhi believed in the Varnashrama-Dharma, although he aware that the untouchability is the part of it.

2) Ritual is grounded in tradition:

There is a continuous cycle of Rituals in different stages of our life. Every religion possesses some rituals. As, for example, there are sixteen important rituals (Samskars) prevailed in Hinduism. Same way ancestral worship is also common in every society and religion. The example of Varnashrama-Dharma is best for it.

30“According to Xunzi, Rituals have three roots:

30Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health’

31Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health’
(1) Heaven and Earth is the root of life.
(2) Rulers and teachers are the root of order.
(3) Our ancestors are the root of commonality. By identifying the social origin of rituals with the great sage thirty one kings of the past, they (rituals) are endowed with an aura of ‘sacredness’ that would increase the likelihood people care for and follow them.” (Teenu Nandal: p.30, 31)

(3) The ritual involves emotion and form (i.e, external, visible action):

Ritual must has meaning and purpose, so emotion is necessary and it has a great impact over the believers. Same way forms is also an integrate part of ritual. Without emotion and form perfection of the rite is not possible. Without the involvement of both performer and participant ritual become a mechanic and has less effect. So it seems useless and there is no hope of satisfying purposes. In course of time, the ritual will be losing its importance, because ritual is an action, which is visible. Ritual has the capacity to continue beliefs and values of religion.

(4) The details of rituals can be changed depending on the contexts:

Thus, exemplary people could make the elaborate forms of ritual more florid or its simplified forms leaner, but they dwell in the mean of its main course. To be effective, as noted previously, they must involve expressions of emotions. They begin to be seen as wholly determined by individual choice.” (Teenu Nandal: p.31)

(5) Rituals specify different treatment for different people (as opposed to practices that are meant to treat everybody equally):

Hindu Rituals specify different treatment for different people. As a community basis, ritual duty is not equal for all the castes/varns in one ritual. The duty of Brahmin only performs; while the duty of a Kshatriya is a participant and patron (yajman). The Shudra and outcasts are forbidden from rituals. The ritual duty is different for women, hence most of the ritual duty denied to them. There will be using different material used in rituals as per economic and political status, it is said that an individual level it also treats differently. However, some basic material remained

---

32Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health’
same, but quality, quantity and varieties/types of material are different. We can see this clear difference between the ritual of King and the common man of the Kshatriya.

(6) **Rituals are non-coercive (in contrast to legal punishment):**

Man is a social animal and socialization can play an important role in human life. As a process of socialization human being become a part of their groups or community. As a member of that group and power system, he has to accept such code of conduct. In this way we can say that Rituals are non-coercive. Hence, it is best to rely on non-coercive rituals that command willing assent and participation. Collins (2004) argues that rituals are pervasive aspects of social life.’ (Teenu Nandal: p.31)

(7) **Rituals are socially legitimate: (As opposed to practices that are not endorsed by society at large.)**

Most of the scholars believed that the purpose of ritual is good; it is accepted by the people. Menace Rituals are socially legitimate. However, it may be true or not true. Because it is not necessary that all rituals are good for everybody, hence they are good for their drafter or community. Yet the important point was that what was the purpose behind that ritual? Why and for whom those particular rituals were created? It is believed and undeniable that ritual is created for the common good, but for whom? If the ritual was created for the common good of special groups or community, this feature is satisfying for them. While this common good became a privilege for some group or people and contrary it becomes unjust for other groups. How we can say that Rituals are socially legitimate? Hindu rituals are called socially legitimate. It is true for Brahmin and Kshatriya. But it is not true for the Shudras and Outcastes because most of the performances of rituals forbid them and providing strict punishment for violation. It is also true for those rituals too, which have political ends.

With the ‘Grihasthasrams,’ this ritual is done by the ‘Grihasth’ for their benefit him and his family. The aim of the ritual is satisfied by him only. According to the principle of the Hindu ritual, Yajman has undergone to

---

33Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health’
such a process of ritual, because who is impure. The ritual master is believed pure and according to his guidance, the ritual is done. So the performance of ritual basically individually and others is observable only. Hence the aim of the ritual is the common good of the family or group, but it is performed by individual or couple. (Husband and wife) If we broadly extended and accepted that the couple as a united form of one human being or symbolized form of ardhnarishvar (half man plus half women united in one human being), we can surely say that the ritual is performed mostly by individuals.

In discussion of chapter two, ‘Brahmin, Ritual, and Renounce,’ J. C. Heesterman enforced on two points: 34First through ritual is regeneration of the universe, it is not a communal, but a strictly a private celebration, cantering on the single Yajman who is the sole beneficiary. Second, the ritual is the domain of absolute purity, the Brahmin ritual specialists are pure and yajman has to undergo a purificatory ceremony, the ‘Diksha’, in order to bring admitted to the ritual.” (Heesterman: p.27, 1985)

1.3.3.4 Hindu Ritual:

Hindu ritual means ritual of Hinduism or rituals related with the Hindu Dharm (religion). The majority of people of India believe in the Hindu Dharm (religion). It is said that the word ‘Hindu’ is related to the place of Ganaga and Yamuna River. In the broad way, it is a way of life and cannot be limited in the wall of religion, because it is related to the culture of India. But it is accepted that Hinduism is the religion of India and ‘Chaturvarnvyavastha’ is an integral part of Hinduism. One must be accepted that the Caste system is the reality of India. However, Indian society and the Caste system are two sides of a one coin. It also accepted that the Scheduled Castes discriminate on the base of caste system.

What is ritual? Before giving its answer one can think about where does it start and ends? It is a puzzling like which come first, a hen or an egg? Same way ritual prevailed from life to death, or we can extend its limit and say that rituals predominated from before birth to after death. It starts from our

daily routine to special ceremony. It holds all fields of life. It is too tough to measure the border of ritual and it varied from society to society and one group to another group. In daily routine when common men get up from the bed and put his first step on the ground, ritual started and it's repeated in the bath, worship, donating food grain/food for bird/animal before taking breakfast and going to office/occupation. These are rituals and there are also existence a series of rites. As, for example, for worshipping of the god, it includes: lighting a lamp, offering foodstuffs before the images, reciting prayers/hymns, playing sankh (conch shell) or bell, aarati, etc. Means ritual includes all Hindu practices of life such as Samsakaras, Vratas, Pujas, and Customs etc. Their classification can be varied as per purpose of the user. And we can put in a one basket of rituals. All religions have rituals and they are woven into the human life in such a way that it cannot be inseparable. Rituals are not only holds in the all walks of life, but also giving the direction in a way of life.

**Operational Definition of Hindu Rituals:**

Hindu rituals are an action or activity which has a religious meaning, it starts before the birth and ends not at the death, but extended to after the death and they are performed through various rites or series of rites or ceremonies of the festivals and fairs, with a view to benefit of the individual or family or whole group.

**In Short:** Hindu Rituals are a sum of Puja, Samsakars, vrats and customs, which are not only related to religion but also related to the social behavior of life.

**1.3.3.5 Hindu Rituals and Samskars:**

The distinct characteristics of Hinduism are caste based society; hence it is believed that Varna based society. The Indian scholars can be divided into two groups for base of division of labor. One group of Dalits scholars strictly believed that the membership of a caste or Varna is getting only through by birth. While the other groups of nondalits scholars rejected that base and accepted ‘karm’ for it. However, in the socially graded system of Varanashram, it is accepted that Brahmans are considered to be the purest and they are solely performed of rituals. They are not only performers of rituals,
but most of the religious activities. Hence it is not possible for outcasts, but, none of three varns can achieve this occupation of ritual and religious activities. As a result the occupation of the Brahmin is believed to be the most superior and purest of all social activities. And contrary the occupations of the Shudras and Outcasts are not believed only low but also polluted occupations. The activities of cleaning, sweeping of streets, handling dead animals, handling human feces (faces), cremating the human dead, cleaning processes associated with bodily excrements etc. are associated with polluted matter. They are excluded from the ritual and religious activities. Women also discriminated on the same ground of impure activities of menstruation and childbirth. So, Shudras, women and outcasts are not allowed in sacred activities. This exclusion is not limited only for their body, but also their souls too. So it transformed into the rigid caste system and their rules of behavior or sacred and profane are evolved. The pivot concept of Hindu rituals is sacred and profane. Even birth as well as death is also believed as a profane and the purification of the events of life and beyond life is necessary.

1.3.3.6 Hindu Samskars:

**Definition:** Samskars means refining or purification; the life of the baby is getting enriched by the values of the life. The followings are some definition of it.

1. **(1)** Hindu Samskars is a popular ritualistic ceremony, expressive of the core of the Hindu religion. The sacraments relating to the body are called Samskars rituals which aim at purifying the body, mind and intellect of an individual and are performed on all major stages of life from birth to death. The Samskars cover full span of life, they are performed even after the death of the individual.” (Musashi Tachikawa: p.91, 1969)

2. **(2)** In English, the word ‘Sacrament’ possesses the meanings of Ritual. Sacrament means religious ceremony or act regarded as outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace. (3) Samsakaras means religious purificatory rites and ceremonies for sanctifying the body, mind and intellect of a being.

---


and intellect of an individual, so that he may become a full fledged
member of the community. But, the Hindu Samsakaras combine a number
of preliminary considerations and rites and, others accompanying
regulations and observances.” (Pande: 1987)

**Operational Definitions of Samskars:**

Hindu rituals mean...

(1) Hindu rituals combine the rules and regulations of Achara, Vychara
and Prayashchitta for the period of Conception to the death and after
death of the individual, which performed through various rites or
series of rites, ceremonies of festivals and fairs or any concerned
religious activity or action.

(2) Hindu rituals is an action or activity which has a religious meaning, it
starts from before the birth and ends not at the death, but extended to
after the death, they are performed through various rites or series of
rites or ceremonies of the festivals and fairs, with a view to benefit of
the individual or family or whole group.

(3) Hindu Rituals are a sum of samskars, Puja, brats, festival and fair
ceremonies, customs, etc., which are not only related to religion, but
also related to the whole social behavior of life.

**1.3.3.7 Sources of Hindu Samsakars:**

37The following sources of Hindu Samsakars are described by Raj Bali Pande

(1) Vedas (2) The Brahmans (3) The Aranyaks and Upanisads (4)
Sutras Grhyasutras (5) Other Sources (6) Dharmsutras (7) The Smritis
(8) The Epics (9) The Purans (10) The Commentaries:

(1) Vedas:

The Vedas are universally recognized as the primary source the source
of Hinduism. But it contains hymns used by the priests in the sacrifices to
higher gods, in which some hymns are believed related to rites and
ceremonies. They are mostly concerned with the wedding, the funeral and the
conception. According to scholars, their narrations may not be ritualistic.
Hence we can say that they are the direct inspiration of the later day samskars

---

37 Pandey, Raj Bali. ‘Hindu Samskars,’ Delhi: Motilal Banaridas Pub..
like the marriage (Vivah), the Antyesti and the Garbhdhana. Hence, they are transformed, such as wedding into the Vivah, the funeral into the Antyesti and the conception into Garbhdhana.  

38\textsuperscript{a} We find in the Grhyasutras many citations homonymous to the Vedic Mantras. This fact indicates that a large number of the items of the Samskaras were suggested by the Vedic verses in question and they originated in the later Vedic or the post-Vedic period.” (Pande: p.2. 1987)

\textbf{(2) The Brahmans:}

39\textsuperscript{a} The Brahmans are mostly occupied with the Srauta sacrifices that were the supreme religious concern of the time. From them, however, we get sporadic references that supply some data of constructing a history of the Samskaras.” (Pande: p. 4, 1987)

\textbf{(3) The Aranyakas and Upanisads:}

40\textsuperscript{a} The Aranyakas and Upanisads are mainly concerned with philosophical subjects and do not condescend to deal with rituals.’ Some Vedic sacrifices and rituals were becoming very popular and found here and there in the Aranyakas and Upanisads. We can find many references of the four asramas and upanayans-samskaras. Hence, ‘Taittiriya aranyak is important for the Samskaras.” (Pande: p. 5, 1987)

\textbf{(4) Sutras:}

\textbf{(A) The Grhyasutras:}

41\textsuperscript{a} A systematic treatment of domestic rites is found in the Sutras literatures.

\textbf{The Grhyasutras:} deals with domestic rituals, which necessarily relate to the Samskars. They give all particulars of the relevant rituals and the Mantras recited during the performances of the Samskars. Grhyasutras belong to different Vedic schools, and differ from one another to some extent.” (Puja and Samskaras: p. 91)

42\textsuperscript{a} “It is in the Grhyasutras that we find the directions for all sorts of usages, ceremonies, rites, customs and sacrifices, the performances and observances of

\footnotesize{38 Pandey, Raj Bali. ‘Hindu Samskars,’ Delhi: Motilal Banaridas Pub, p.2.}

\footnotesize{39 Ibid, p.4.}

\footnotesize{40 Ibid, p.5.}

which were binding on the Hindu householder.” (Pande: p.7, 1987)

Their spans of Samskars were performed from the moment when the individual was conceived in the womb till the hour of his death and even further the funeral ceremonies.

According to the Grhyasutras, referred by Raj Bali Pande, 43 “the followings are the Samskars, which begin with the Vivah, marriage ceremonies and end deal with the Antyesthi. However, many Grhyasutras believed funeral ceremony as an inauspicious and omitted. They described in separate Parisistas or addenda and Pitramedha-sutras. The following are the Samskars are described.

(1) Vivaha. (2) Marriage ceremonies and Garbhdhana. (3) Pumsavana.
(11) Antyesti’.

44 ‘The ritual aspects of the Samskars are emphasized and minutely described in the Grhyasutras. Their social sides are simply hinted at or briefly described.’ (Pande: p. 7, 1987)

(5) Other Sources:

There are also some other literature existed after late period and they were classified as Grhyasutras. 45 ‘According to Raj Bali Pande, other branches of the ritual literature are:


‘Parisisitas’ in which certain features of the Samskars are dealt, within a greater detail that were briefly described in the Grhyasutras.’

(6) Dharmsutras:

According to Raj Bali Pande, 46 “Dharmsutras are closely connected with Grhyasutras. By ‘Dharm’, Hindu means ‘right duty, law’ and also religious

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
custom and usage.’ So at many places the contents of Dharmsutras and Grharsutras overlap each other. They later describe the domestic rites which the householder was required to perform in his individual capacity, whereas the former were concerned with rules and regulations about the conduct of men of the Hindu community and do not describe the rituals of any kind. **Dharmsutras deals with the Varna (castes) and the Ashrams.”**

However, certain Samsakars such as the 47“Upanayana, the Vivaha, the Samavartana, the Upakarma, the adhyayas, the Asaucha, the Sraddhas and the Madhuparkas were suggested in Grhyasutras and given their rules, The concepts taken away from the Grhyasutras and developed as a (social aspects of the Samsakaras and became part of the Dharmsutras. As for examples the Vivaha, Upanayana is a part of the ashrams-Dharma, but it considered an important ritual in Dharmsutras.” (Pande: p.8, 1987)

(7) **The Smritis.**

After the development of Dharmsutras, the process was not stopped and continued. The Smritis is called a systematic development of the Dharmsutras. As per opinion of various scholars, like the Dharmsutras the Smritis are also concerned with the social conduct of a man rather than with rituals. 48According to Raj Bali Pande, ‘their contents can be classified under three heads. Achara, Vyahara or law and Prayashchitta’ (Pande: p.8, 1987).

(1) **Achara:** Mostly Manusmriti is the main source of Achara.

(2) **Vyahara or law:** Mostly Naradasmriti is the main source of Vyahara.

(3) **Prayashchitta:** Mostly Parasarasmriti is the main source of Prayashchitta. Ceremonial impurity due to birth and death is discussed in it. The Upanayana is the Samsakars of the first staged of life and the Vivah is the Samsakara of second staged of life of an individual. They are described deeply and got prominent place in this category. Mostly Manusmriti is the main source of Achara. Yet, five great sacrifices which known as Panchamahayajnas had got important place in Manusmriti.

---


48Ibid.
The smritis also offer us mass information about prayers, sacrifices, household duties, eschatology, funeral ceremonies and sacrifices to the dead.’ We find in them discussion on the right of performing the Samsakars, minor ceremonies and rites, we worship of new pauranika deities at various occasions in life, all unknown to the Grhyasutras and Dharmsutras.’ (Pande: p. 8, 1987)

The Importance of the Smritis:

The socio-religious life of an individual of Hinduism revolves around the Samsakars; hence there has been too much importance of the smritis. According to Raj Bali Pande, “The main features of the Smritis as regards the smokers are that they mark the transition from the Vedic to Smartis and Pauranika Hinduism. They omit almost all the Vedic sacrifices and introduce new types of worship and ceremonies. Greater restrictions are placed on social sides of the Samskaras. The Mahabharata was regarded as a Samhita as early as before the fifth century” (Pande: p. 8, 1987).

(8) The Epics:

The Epics literature are also a good source of the Samskars, but the Brahmins, who were the custodians of literature, utilized the epics, as they became popular for propagation of their culture and religion. So many religious and ceremonial elements which did not originally belong to it, entered the huge body of the Mahabharata and it became a reference book of the Hindu religion’ (Pande: p. 9, 1987). We can find many similarities between the Mahabharata and the Manusmriti, which is not any coincidence. According to the scholars, ‘the Vrddha Gautama, the Brhaspati and the Yam-Smritis originally formed a part of the Mahabharata.’

(9) The Puranas:

The Brahma-Puran and rites of quotas have a close relation. The Smritis and the Puranas seemed identical in regards many Samskars. As, for example, the “long passage from the first three chapters of the Manusmritis are borrowed by the Bhavisya-Purana.

49Ibid.
The Puranas deal with the ceremonies, customs and usages, and fasts and feasts of the Hindus and thus throw light on main parts of Samskaras. An astrological consideration that played an important part in the Samskaras are developed in the Purans.’

‘The Brahma-Puran and rites of quotas have a close relation. The Purans and the Smritis have many Samskaras which are related with each other.’ (Pande: p. 9-10, 1987)

(10) The Commentaries:

The various Commentaries on the Grhyasutras, Dharmsutras and the Smritis added further and latest information about the Samskaras. Their purpose in not only explains of the ancient texts, but also giving supplements and restrictions too. So, old provisions of the Dharmsutras were replaced by new one.

Importance of the Commentaries:

Commentaries are more important than the texts, as the Hindus of the different provinces follow the particular commentary prevalent in them. Modern pundits reject even sacred authorities if they are not quoted by the commentators.” (Pande: p. 11, 1987)

Other sources:

Other important sources are the Mediaeval Treaties, the customs, Indo-Iraniyans, Indo-Europeans and Semitic sources etc.

1.3.3.8 Classification of Hindu Rituals/Samskars:

(A) According to various scriptures, like Grhyasutras, smritis, Puranas, Brahmans, etc. Hindu Samskars (customs) can be classified into main three categories, which are as under.

(1) Rituals based on Castes.

(2) Rituals based on family/kul/clan.

(3) Rituals based on region.

(B) Hence, "In ‘Puja and Samsakara’, such customs as can be classified broadly into the following three heads:


(1) Customs prevalent in a particular region. (Desacaras)
(2) Customs peculiar to a family. (Kulacaras)
(3) Customs current in a particular caste. (Jatyacaras) and
(4) Other the classification of Hindu Samsakara.”

(C) In the preface of ‘Hindu Samskars’, Raj Bali Pandey has classified entire Samskars into the following five heads.

(1) The Pre-natal Samsakaras.
(2) The Samsakaras of childhood.
(3) The Educational Samsakaras.
(4) The Marriage Samsakaras.
(5) The funeral Samsakaras.

(D) Important sixteen Samskaras:

As mentioned in the book, ‘Puja and samskars’ (p. 99), Samskars can also divide into three groups:

(1) Rarely performed: jatakarma and vedavratacatusraya.
(2) Briefly Performed: Garbhadana, Pumsavana, Simatonnayana, Namakaranam, Annaprasana, Chudakarma, Godana, Samvartana.
(3) Always performed: Upanayana, Vivaha, Antyeshti.

1.3.3.9 Numbers of Samskaras:

There is not seen uniformity in the numbers of Samskars in various Hindu scriptures. Different scriptures have different numbers. However, there is seen such a variation in the numbers and it is varied from twelve to forty-eight numbers of Samskars. Some texts have mentioned sixteen Samskars, which known as a Solahsamsakaras, which was accepted by most of the performers of Hindu rituals. 54“The latest ‘Paddhatis’ have adopted this (sixteen Samskaras) number. The Smrty arthasara (p.3) contains: Here are the Samsakaras from Garbhadhana (conception) to Vivaha (marriage). There is necessary main Samsakaras sixteen in number.” (Pande: p. 23, 1987)

The sources of Samskars can divide into two parts:

(1) The Grahyautra sources.
(2) Non-Grahyautra or Other sources.

(1) The Grahyautras:

"According to Grahyautras, the numbers of Samskaras are ‘fluctuate from twelve to eighteen and the lists are slightly varying in names of particular Samskaras or in some additions and omissions.” (Pande: p. 18, 1987). ‘The followings are the list of Samskaras described in different Grahyautras.

(A) Asvalayana. (B) Paraskara. (C) Baudhayana. (D) Varaha. (E) Varikhanasa.’

The source of the following all sections (A to J) is (Pande: p.19, 1987).

(A) Asvalayana Grahyautras:

(B) Paraskara Grahyautras:

(C) Baudhayana Grahyautras:

(D) Varaha Grahyautras:

(E) Varikhanasa Grahyautras:
Parayana (14) Vratabandhavisagra(15) Upakarma. (16) Utsarjana (17)
Samavartana (18) Panigrahana.

(2) Non-Grahyautras or Other sources: (Source: Pande: p. 20, 21, 1987).
(F) The Dharmasastra. (G) Gautama-Dharmasastra. (H) Manusmriti. (I)
Varikhanasa Grahyautras (J) The Dharmasastra.

(F) The Dharmasastra:
It describes Hindu laws and customs, not all of them care to narrate
samsakaras. They contain rules about the following Samsakars:
(1) Upanayana (2) Vivaha (3) Upakarma (4) Utsarjana (5) Anadhyayas
(6) Asaucha.

(G) Gautama-Dharmasastra:
(1) Garbhadana (2) Pumsavana (3) Simantonayan (4) Jatakaran (5)
Namakaranam. (6) Niskramana (6) Annaprasana (7) Chula (8)
Upanayana (9)-12 Chatvari Veda –Vratani (13) Snana (14) Sahadharmacharini-Samyoga (15)-(19) Panaka-Mahayajnas (20)-(26) Astaka,
Parvana, Sraddha, Sravani, Agrahayani, Chaitre, Asvayaji-itii,
SaptaPika,Yajna-Samssththa (27)-(33) Agnyadheyam, Agnihotram, Darsu-
Paurnamasya, Chaturmasya, Agrayanesti, Nirudha-pasubanadha,
Sautramani-itii,Sapta-HaviryajnaSamsthah. (34) to (40) Agnistoma,
Atyagnistoma, Ukatha, Sodasi, Vijapeya, Atiratra,Aptoryama-itii and
Sapt-Somayajna-Samsthah.

(H) Manusmriti:
‘ According to Manu, the Smarta Samsakara proper is thirteen; from
conception to death; and Varikhanasa Grahyautras has eighteen samskars
((Pande: p.21, 1987). They are as under:
(1) Garbhadana. (2) Pumsavana. (3) Simantonayana. (4) Jatakaran. (5)
Upanayana or Maunjibadhana. (10) Kesanta. (11) Samvartana. (12)
Vivaha. (13) Smasana.’

(I) Varikhanasa Grahyautras:
(1) Rtusamgamana (2) Garbhadana (3) Simanta (4) Visnubali (5)
Jatakaran (6) Utthana (7) Namakarna (8) Annaprasana (9)
Pravasagamana (10) Pindavardhana (11) Chaulaka (12) Upanayana

(J) The Dharmasastra:

Dharmasastra describes Hindu laws and customs, not all of them care to narrate samskaras. They contain rules about the following samskaras:


1.3.3.10 Sequences of Samskaras:

There is not seen consensus about orders of ‘Solahsamskaras.’ Which Samskara come first? There is a problem of deciding the sequence of the first Samskars between ‘Marriage’ and ‘Garbhadhana.’ How can we decide? It is like a same question related to the evolution of life, the riddle of whether the chicken or the egg comes first? However, we are not going into deeply, in that subject or trying to get its answer. Here Garbhadhana means it is a conception of the child in the womb of its mother.

‘The Grahyautras generally deal with bodily Samskaras beginning with Vivah and ending with the funeral. The Majority of the books omit the funeral, only a few, e.g., the Paraskara, the Asvalayana and Baudhayana describe it.’ As for examples, if we observe the order of the Samskars in the Asvalayana Grahyautras, Paraskara Grahyautras, the first samskars is the Vivah. But last is different, the Antyesti is the last samskars in the Asvalayana Grahyautras and Paraskara Grahyautras. While in the Baudhayana Grahyautras originated with the Vivah, but last samskars’s name is Pitramedha.

In course of time some Samskaras have lost its importance and became rare. However, some Samskaras are not only prevalent today and also performed briefly. Yet, some Samskaras are universally woven with the life of the individual in such a way that they are always performed. 57 The latest Paddhatis have adopted the Samskars from Garbhadhana (Conception) to Vivaha (Marriage).’ (Pande: p. 22, 1987)

1.3.3.11 Important Hindu Samskars:

It is believed that there are important sixteen Samskaras which are performed (Solah Samskaras) during the whole life. But there is variation in

the numbers of Samskaras in different scriptures of the Hindu religion. Despite different opinions prevailing about the Samskaras, there is no conflict about their sources like Vedas, Sutras, and Smritis etc.

As per the Gautama Dharmashastra, there are forty Samskaras, the Grihya sutras prescribes between twelve and eighteen, while Manusmriti mentions only thirteen. However, traditionally it is accepted as a Solah Samskars. Generally the Samskaras are performed during the four stages (ashrams) of life or from birth to death. The following are some name and meaning of the Solah Samskaras, which may be helpful for the general understanding of it.

The Solah Samskaras:


(A) Before Birth:
(1) Garbhadhana:

Vivah is the important samskars and every couple wants progeny for their lineage. The Garbhadhana should be performed when a married couple decides to have a child.  

The rite through which a man placed his seed in a woman was called Garbhadhana. The rite of conception, a prenatal ceremony, performed at the time of conception.’ (Pande: p.48, 1987)

Significance: To produce the best possible progeny.

(2) Pumsavana:

There are two purposes of Pumsavana samskars. The first is to promote the birth of a male child. (For perpetuation of the family line and tradition) ; second, to insure the good health of the fetus and the proper formation of its organs, regardless of gender.” (Swami Chidatamanjee: p. 152, 2009).

---

Time of performance: It is performed in the second, third and fourth month of the pregnancy. 60“Ceremony performed when the first signs of conception are seen, and is to be performed when someone desires a male child.” (Dvivedi: p. 200, 2007)

Significance: Generally It is a Ceremony performed seeking a male child or to increase the chances of the birth of a male child.

(3) Simantam or Simatonnayana:

This is usually performed for women and celebrated by the women. Special music is arranged for her. 61The third Samskars of the embryo was Simatonnayana. That rite was called Simanta, in which the hairs of a pregnant woman were parted.’ (Pande: p.64, 1987). 62“A ceremony of parting of the hairs of the mother is expected to keep her spirits high and positive. Special music is arranged for her.” (Dvivedi: p. 200, 2007).

Time of performance: It is performed between the fifth and the eight months of pregnancy.

Significance: The parting of hair ceremony is performed for safe delivery. 63‘The purpose of this Samskars was partly superstitious and partly practical. People believed that a woman in her pregnancy was subject to attacks of evil spirits and some rite should be performed toward them off.’(Pande:p.64, 1987)

(B) At birth:

(4) Jatakarman:

It is related to the birth ceremony and performed by the husband. The purpose of this samskars is to give thanks for his mate (mother of the child) and nature for giving a progeny and also take care for future protection of the child and his wife. 64“The man, who shared the pleasures in the company of his mate, sought to protect her and the babe, during the critical time, from natural and supernatural dangers.”(Pande: p. 70, 1987).

64 Ibid, p.70.
Meaning: "The persons concerned sprinkle water on the woman that is giving birth to the child. The father looks at the face of the newly born infant and this act once redeems to his ancestors.” (Dvivedi: p. 204, 2007)

Time of the Performance: At the time of birth and before severing the cord.

Significance: The Jatkarman Samskars combines three rites:

66(i) Medh-janana: It was the first ceremony Medh-janana or production of intelligence.

(ii) Ayusa: The rite for ensuring a long life for the child. After this the mother was praised for bearing a son, the hope of the family. The husband was reciting the verse for her. Then the navel-cord was severed and the child washed and given the breasts of mothers. The father puts down a pot of water near the head of the mother with the verse.” (Pande: p.74).

(iii) Strength: This rite performed for the hardy, martial and pure life of the child.

(C) Childhood:

(5) Namakaranam: (Naming the child.)

Meaning: In this Samskars, the child is given a formal name.

Time of Performance: Naming ceremony performed usually on the 10th or 12th day after birth. There was given some variation on the day of performance, it may be 13th, 16th, 19th, 32th and day of the birth of the child.

Significance: “Name is the primary means of social intercourse, it brings about the merits and it is the root of fortune. From name man attains fame. Therefore, a naming ceremony is very praiseworthy’. (Pande: p. 79, 1987).

(6) Niskramana:

Meaning: Performed in the first outing of the baby into the world and usually involves the first viewing of the sun also. The formal ‘darshans’ of the sun and moon are done for the child.

Time of Performances: The time of performing was varied from the twelfth day after the birth to the fourth month.

---

67Ibid, p.79.
Significance: “The significance lay in the physical necessity of the child and impressing on it the sublime grandeur of the universe.’ (Pande: p. 89, 1987)

(7) Annaprasana:

Meaning: Performed on the occasion of the first feeding solid food. According to Raj Bali Pande (p. 91), “Feeding of the child with solid food was the next important stage in the life of the child.” It may be cooking rice, ghee, lentils, etc.

Time of Performance: According to Grhyasutras it was performed in the sixth month after the birth of the child.

Significance: “The child was weaned away from his mother at the proper time. The feeding ceremony also warned the mother that a certain time she should stop suckling the child.” (Pande: p. 93, 1987). The object of this samskars is to pray to the gods with Vedic Mantras to bless the child with good digestive powers, good thoughts and talents.

(8) Chudakarma:

It is related to the first shaving of the child, but kept a ‘Shikha.’

Meaning: “Chuda means the ‘lock or tuft of hair (Shikha)’ kept after the remaining part is shaved off.” (Dvivedi: p. 200, 2007)

Time of Performances: The tonsure ceremony performed usually in the first or third year of the child's birth. Also, it initiates the maintenance of a ‘Sikha’ as a religious necessity after that age.

Significance: ‘Sutra and Charaka confirm that removing of hair, excess nails, etc., contribute to strength, vigor, longevity, purity and beauty of the individual.’

Achievement of the long life of the child is the key object of this samskars, hence sutras helps us in tracing the connection between the longevity and the top-hair. “According to the Sutras, ‘inside the head, near the top, is the joint of a Sira (artery) and Sandhi (a critical juncture). There is the eddy of the hairs is the vital spot called Adhipati (overload). Any injury to

68 Ibid, p.89.
this part causes sudden death.’ The protection of this vital part was thought necessary and keeping a tuft of hairs just over the vital part served this purpose.” (Pande: p. 101, 1987).

(9) Karana-vedha: Meaning: Piercing of the ears.

**Time of Performance:** The ear piercing ceremony performed during the seventh or eighth month. The time of performance of this samskaras was varied. 72‘The ear piercing ceremony performed during the third or fifth year.’(Dvivedi: p. 214, 2007).

**Significance:** Raj Bali Pande has given reference of Susruta in his book (p. 102), according to him, “Ears of a child should be bored for protection from disease in his opinion) and decoration.” Now a day this ceremony is performed mostly for girls as boys are reluctant to get their ears pierced for fear of ridicule or looking feminine or orthodox.

**Student:**

(10) Vidyarambha:

**Meaning:** Performed on the occasion of a child's initiation into education.

**Time of Performance:** 73According to Visvamitra, these Samskaras was performed in the fifth year of the child. In the opinion of the anonymous Smriti writer in the Sodasa-samskaras Vidhi it could be performed even in the seventh year.” (Pande: p. 108, 1987)

**Significance:** its name suggests that it originated at a very high stage of civilization, hence when alphabets were evolved.

However, 74‘the Grhyastras, the Dharmsutras and early smritis do not mention it. Even the mediaeval and the modern Paddhatis that describes the samskaras do not contain it.’ We are getting the information about this samskaras from a few treaties. The name mentioned in the book ‘Hindu Samskaras’ was, ‘the Vrmitrodaya, the Smrti-Chandrika, the Samskara-ratnamala of Gopinatha Bhatta and the commentary of Apararka on the Yajnavalkya-smritis.” (Pande: p. 106, 1987)

---

74 Ibid.
(11) **Upanayana:**

**Meaning:** It is known as the thread, ceremony, hence this is the ceremony of the wearing of the sacred thread. The right of the wearing of the sacred thread is confined to the upper three castes only. ‘The meaning of the word ‘Upanayana’ is taking charge of a student.’ (Pande: p. 114, 1987)

**Time of Performance:** "This ceremony was performed in the eighth, eleventh and twelfth year of the male child, calculated the date of conception, for the first three varns.’ Brahman: eighth year, Kshatriya: eleventh year and Vaishya: twelfth year.” (Dvivedi: p. 214, 2007)

**Significance:** According to Apastamba and Bharadvaja, the Upanayan was meant learning. According to Manu, ‘this ritual purifies this life as well as the other.’ But in the course of time it became more religious and education became a secondary performance, but when it became a bodily Samskars the ritualistic significant rose in importance. “The Upanayana samskars became compulsory somewhere towards the close of the Upanisadic period.”(Pande: p. 123, 1987).

(12) **Vedarambha:**

**Meaning:** The name itself suggests that it is the starting of study of Vedas. According to the “Encyclopedia of Indian Customs and Rituals,’ the meaning of Vedarambha is ‘To observe the disciplines and to commence and undertake the studies of the Vedas and their branches (systems and limbs known as ‘Sangipana.’) are called Vedarambha.” (Dvivedi: p. 220, 2007)

"The Vedarambha samskars are not mentioned in the Grhyasutras and the Dharmsutras. It was first mentioned in the Vyas-Smriti. The Paddhati writers have recognized the distinction between the Upanayana and TheVedarambha and they insert the latter between the Upanayana and the Samavartana.” (Dvivedi: p. 142, 2007)

**Time of Performance:** This Samsakars was performed at the age of sixteen.

**Significance:** The child is thereafter authorized to perform all rituals; studies of Vedas begin with the Guru. The ceremony is marking the beginning of the study of the Vedas.

---

76 Ibid, p. 142.
Adolescence:

(13) Kesantha:

**Meaning:** Kesantha was a samskars which consecrated the first shaving of the student’s bread. It was also called ‘godana’, because it was characterized by the gift of a cow to the teacher and to the barber.” (Pande: p. 143, 1987).

**Time of Performance:** At the age of sixteen and the arrival of the youth.

**Significance:** The ceremony marking the first shaving of the beard or the approach of manhood.

(14) Samvartana:

**Meaning:** Returning to the home from the ashrams or the house of the Guru.

**Time of Performances:** Performed when a student completes his education and returns home from the school. It was performed at the close of Brahmcharya and said licensed of the marriage.

**Significance:** This ceremony shows how he was the respect in which scholars, who had completed their education, were held by society in ancient India.” (Pande: p. 152, 1987).

Practically, in olden days the schools existed in remote places called ashrams. Once a student left home for education, he would return only after several years of study in the house of his teacher. So his return was a matter of joy and celebration for the family because the child not only survived the tough conditions of life in Gurukulas but also acquired knowledge of the scriptures.

Householder:

(15) Marriage ceremony (Vivah):

**Meaning:** According to the Ghyrasutra, it is the first samskars because it is the origin and center of the domestic sacrifices. So the Vivah is the most important among the Hindu Samskars.

**Time of Performance:** The word marriage has a reference to ‘a union of the male and female which does not cease with the act of procreation but persists after the birth of offspring until the young are capable of supplying their own needs.’

Marriage is viewed as a sacrament and not a contact. It is a lifelong

---

78 Ibid, p.152.
79 Ibid, p.156.
commitment of one wife and one husband. It is the strongest social bond that takes place between them.” (Pande: p. 156, 1987)

**Time of Performances:** According to the Ghrayusutra, “the marriage was generally arranged after the girl had puberty. The consumption of marriage could take place immediately after the nuptial ceremonies.” (Pande: p. 184, 1987)

**Significance:** Marriage usually marks the beginning of life as a householder. Child marriages were the order of the day in ancient times. Hence, the marriage Samskars had many rites and arranged in a sequence. 80 “During the sutra period the ritualists arranged the floating mass of rituals into a system and every Ghrayusutra describes the ceremonies in a set of order.” (Pande: p. 202, 1987). However the rites and rituals of the marriage have changed and it is also seen variation in different literature. But the process of evolving is continued and its significant base of the caste is not changed.

(16) **Death (Antyeshti or the funeral ceremony):**

**Meaning:** The last rites done after the death.

**Time of Performance:** Funeral rites performed after death and up to fifteen days. Usually it involves cremation rites, making offerings to gods and ancestors seeking the soul’s comfortable journey to the worlds of light, scattering of ashes in select places, and serving of food to the relatives and among the poor.

**Significance:** According to Baudhayana Pitramedhasutras, 81 “it is well-known that through the Samskars after the birth one conquers this earth, through the Samskars after the death the heaven.” Hence, ‘the next world is nothing but the replica of this earth, and the needs of the dead are the same as those of the living.” (Pande: p. 274, 1987).

1.3.3.12 **The Constituents of Hindu Rituals:**

Hindu samskars show a way of the whole life of an individual. It explains not only the behavior of the society, but also gives all socio-religious aspects of the Indian society. The origin of it’s not important, but it became the laws of the society. Hence, they are socio-religious laws which are

---


81 Ibid, p.274.
compulsory for the whole society. The ruler had also to obey the rules and he had a responsibility of the maintaining law and order according to its. The role of Samskars is very important for strengthening the caste system. According to Raj Bali Pande (p. 36), \textsuperscript{82}“the Samsakars are a complex combination of various elements. They express beliefs, sentiments and knowledge of the ancient Hindus about the nature of human life and the universe and their relation with the superhuman powers that were supposed to guide or control the destiny of man. The Hindus believed that man requires protection, consecration and refinement. For this to a great extent, they depended on Gods whose existence, they seriously felt and whose help invariably they asked. But while they sought aid from the Gods, they also helped themselves by the knowledge they possessed of natural and supernatural world. So we find a mixture of religious and secular factors in the samskars, though they have all assumed a religious garb in course of time.”

\textbf{Constituents of Samskars:}

Most of the Scholars, including Raj Bali Pande have discussed the following Constituents of the Samskars.


\textbf{1.3.3.13 The Elements of Hindu Rituals:}

Generally the rituals possess the following elements, but they may be varied as different religion or community. It is also depends on its types of performance done for individual or community. Hence, these elements are necessary for Hindu rituals.

\textbf{(1) The invoking or calling upon the sacred to be present.}

\textsuperscript{83}“This can take the form of a song (Bhajan), a formal prayer, or ‘aarati’ or a gesture, such as lighting a lamp or burning incense or Yagna. This invocation creates the field of energy into which all are drawn.’ It also helps develops a relationship between the performer and sacred power.” (Teenu Nandal: p. 29).


\textsuperscript{83}Nandal, Teenu. ‘Rituals, Religiosity and Spirituality as Correlatives of Health.’
(2) **Aim of ritual:**

Ritual is called a regeneration of the universe. Every ritual has its special purpose or why the ritual is being done. It is compulsory that the action of the ritual deals with the reason. We can know the answer of gathering of such a community or groups for performing of ritual. Without any aim, there is no possibility of existence of ritual. The core aim of Hindu rituals is purifying the body, mind and intellect of an individual or group or community.

(3) **Rites:**

The purpose of ritual is performed by various rites. These include a one or series of rites. They are puja, offerings, chanting of hymns orally or from sacred texts, or doing arati, or dancing with religious music and songs etc.

(4) **Ritual Master or Specialist:** Brahmin.

In Hindu Rituals the ritual masters are pure and Yajmana has undergone to such a process, because who is impure. He stands not only supreme but also superior to the king. According to the scriptures of Hindu religion like Vedas, Brahmin, sutras, etc., Brahmin possesses absolute purity. Brahmin is supposed symbolically to incorporate the universe.

**Yajaman:** It is noted that the performer of the Hindu Rituals is either the Brahmin or the Yajaman. Hence, such rituals are not requiring the presence of the Brahmin, but Yajman can get directions of that ritual before the performance. Yet, the Brahmin has been direct or indirect necessity of the ritual and he gets the ‘dakhsina; from most of the rituals.

(4) **Beneficiary:**

The Hindu rituals are only for the Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya varns or castes. So naturally the Yajaman is also the member of the Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya. The expense of the ritual is done by them for their benefit.

(5) **The Form of the ritual:**

There are two forms of ritual: Individual and communal celebrations. Basically the ritual is performed in both forms, but its aim is mostly individual. We can say that ritual is done for the benefit of owning a family or common good of the community.
(6) **Place of Ritual:** House, Temple, Shrine or river or mountains, or any place which is believed sacred or holy is the place of ritual.

(7) **Symbols and taboos:**

Taboos mean what is prohibited? There are many beliefs and objects existed about taboos. They are connected with lucky and unlucky days, months or years. There are also believed such object or material or animal as a taboo. The lists of taboos are long, the clothes, food and even human being also included. As, for example, women, widow and Shudra or outcasts are not only prohibited from ritual performance, but also their presence becomes an illegal behavior.

**1.3.3.14 The roots of Hindu rituals:**

After the study of Hindu rituals it further can be classified on the basis of their roots.

(1) **The root of order:** The Varnashram-Dharma.

(2) **The root of life:** Earth and Heaven, Four Ashrams.

(3) **The root of commonality:** Our ancestors.

(4) **The root of individuality:** Worship, prayer.

(1) **The root of order:**

- **The Varnashram-Dharma:** Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

  The Varnashram-Dharma is the center of the Hindu rituals, where order is believed most important. Brahmans are considered to be the purest and they are solely performed of rituals. They are not only performers of rituals, but most of the religious activities. Hence it is not possible for outcasts, but, none of three Varnas can be achieved this occupation of ritual and religious activities. As a result the occupation of Brahmin, he is believed to be the most superior and purest of all social activities. Shudras, women and outcasts are not allowed in sacred activities. They are excluded from the ritual and religious activities. Hence the order of Varnashram-Dharma is Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra respectively. However the ruler or king is mostly member of Kshatriya and their order lie at the second number. The four classes are as under:
(1) **Brahmans or Brahmins class:** They are the priestly class, who perform religious rituals and education and they are entitled to study the Vedas.

(2) **Kshatriya (nobles or warriors):** They are the warrior class, who traditionally had power. They are commanded (by tradition) to protect the people, bestow gifts to the Brahmins, offer sacrifices to gods and ancestors, study the Vedas, dispense justice.

(3) **Vaishyas (commoners or merchants):** They are ordinary people, including merchant and peasant classes, who are expected to tend cattle, offer sacrifices, study the Vedas. Mostly their occupations were related to trade, lend money, and cultivate the land and other agricultural activities.

(4) **Shudras (workers):** They were traditionally served the higher classes. They are the labor class or servicemen and their sole duty is to serve the other three castes. Shudras were not allowed to study, the Vedas or even hear the sacred chants. They cannot be performing most of the Hindu rituals/ Vedic samskars.

(2) **The root of life:** Earth and Heaven, Four Ashrams:

- **Earth and Heaven:**
  The rituals of most of the religions (except Buddhism) combine the heaven and Earth. The root of Hinduism also linked with it. There is a unique goal of every organism is to seek Moksha (liberation), to free from the birth cycle of 64000 species (Yoni). This circulation of birth and death is happening between the Earth and the Heaven.

  In Hinduism, “Dharma actually means that upholds this entire creation. It is a Divine law that is inherent and indivisible, but responsible for all existences.” (Dvivedi: p. 166, 2007). In ancient India, the Dharma-sutras (law books) provided guidance to people in their day to day lives and helped them to adhere to Dharma. And there is a unique relationship between the Earth and the Heavens, as, for example, “If Dharma guides the life of a human being from below acting as the earth, showing him the way from above like a star studded mysterious sky is Moksha. Dharma

---


continues the legs of a Purusha that walk upon the earth; both artha and karma constitute his two limbs active in the middle region, while Moksha constitutes the head that rests in the heaven.” (Dvivedi: p. 168, 2007)  


These are called Purusharths means objectives of man. Because here ‘Purusa’ means human being and artha means object or objectives. According to the Hindu way of life, a man should strive to achieve four chief objectives (purusharths) in his life.  

Four Ashramas (Abodes):  

Hinduism elaborated the social doctrine of the four ashramas (abodes). However, the four ashrams divide themselves neatly into two parts, life in the world as a householder (Grahastha) and outside the world, either as a Vedic student (brahmacharin), as a forest dweller (vanaprastha), or as a roaming mendicant (pravarajaka, sannyasin).” (J.C. Heesterman: p. 40, 1985)  

It concludes that the concept of the four ashrams (abodes) of life is related to the Earth and Heaven. Hence, there was seen some variation about the ages of this ashram. The following are the ashrams of the life.  

(A) Brahmacaryasrams:  

According to this concept, a male member of any of the three higher classes’ i.e. Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya should first become a chaste student. ‘Celibate student stage,’ males have to learn the Veda.  

Meaning: 88 “Brahmacarya means student, usually between twelve to twenty four years of age.” (Student life) (Chidatman: p. 131, 2009)  

Age: Between twelve to twenty four years.  

Duty: The important duty was to study and mostly staying at the house of the Guru, so it was called the ‘Gurukul Vasa.’

86 Chidatman, Swami, ‘Hindu Customs and Traditions,’ p.139, N. Delhi: Anmol pub  
(B) Grihasthasrams: Meaning:
After completing the first ashram, a male become a married householder, so this ashram is known as Grihasthasrams.

Age: The ages of these ashrams usually between twenty four to forty eight years.

Duty: The important duty was purushartha. Hence the male can experience the human purposes of responsibility, wealth, and sexual pleasure etc.

(C) Vanaprastha: (The Anchorite)
Meaning: The ‘Van’ word, the name of these ashrams clearly suggests its purpose, in this stage; he has become a hermit or wilderness dweller.

Age: Third stage of the ashrams lies between forty eight to seventy two years.

Duty: The Grihastha retires from his life in the world to take up pilgrimage and religious observances along with his wife. The main duty of an individual is to devote him to spiritual contemplation.

(D) Samnyasa: (The Renounced)
Meaning: The last ashrams are called Sannyasashrams, where required totally detachment from worldly pleasures including the bare necessities of subsist.

Age: Beyond Seventy Two years.

Duty: Its main goal is to seek Moksha (liberation) through renunciation. He becomes a homeless wandering ascetic i.e. sannyasin and he gives up the world. He develops devotion and tried to seek liberation. Totally detachment from worldly pleasure secluding the bare necessities of subsists.

(3) The root of commonality: Our ancestors:
Ancestor Worship is very common in most of the religions and existed some beliefs, norms and values around it. It is believed that the deceased (ancestors) had spiritual quality and their blessing can helpful and ensures the peace in the life of the whole family. It is also believed that the spirits of ancestors are not only helping in real life, but also takes care of afterlife.
The constituent of rituals is made from the beliefs, norms and values of the ancestor Worship. Most of the rituals are a part of the past and continue in the life of members of the family or group. In broaden era, it is accepted that most of the rituals are a part of the scriptures, which were created in the past. Same ways the source of Hindu rituals are Vedas, sutras, Smritis, Upanisads etc. While performing the Hindu rituals the individual (of three castes, Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya) is expected to tell the clan (gotra) and sutra (thread of connection). It shows the direct relation of the individual with their forefathers and connects them.


The beneficiary is one of the most important elements of the rituals and who is also a patron. He is the only person for whom the ritual is performing for his aim. However, most of the rituals are connected with the Grihasthasrams and. Ritual is done by the Grihasth for the benefit of him and his family. The aim of the ritual is satisfied by him only. According to the principle of the Hindu ritual, Yajaman has undergone to such a process of ritual, because who is impure. The ritual masters are believed pure and according to his guidance, the ritual is done. So the performance of rituals basically individually and others are observer. Hence the aim of rituals is the common good of the family or group, but it is performed by individual or couple (Husband and wife). If we broadly extended and accepted the couple as a united form of one human being or symbolized form of ardhnarishvar (half man plus half women united in one human being), we can surely say that the ritual is performed mostly by individuals.

In discussion of ‘Brahmin, Ritual, and Renouncer,’ J. C. Heesterman enforced on these two points: 89 “First through ritual is regeneration of the universe, it is not a communal, but a strictly a private celebration, centering on the single Yajman who is the sole beneficiary. Second, the ritual is the domain of absolute purity the Brahmin ritual specialists are pure and Yajman has to undergo a purificatory ceremony, the Diksha, in order to be admitted to the ritual.” (Heesterman p. 27, 1985)

---

Worship (Puja):

Puja is derived from the root ‘puj’, to make an offering, however, there are various materials and nonmaterials are used in Puja. The Puja performed at home and temple. The form of Puja may be individual and group level. Their offerings are classified in different ways; hence the following routine offering prevailed in Hindu rituals:

- Recitation of the hymns/mantras of the Vedas or other scriptures.
- Offerings to the kuldevi/gods/goddesses: Generally it contains food taken for the meal.
- A water offering (libation), water or panchadravya offered to god/goddesses/ancestral or the spirits of the deceased.
- Hospitality: There number of rites offered, but it varies as per culture/religion/group.
- Cursory offering (Bali in Sanskrit): It is also offered kuldevi/ancestral/gods/goddesses. It is very common during Navaratri/Durga Puja ceremony.

(A) Materials used for worship:

- There are a variety of materials are used for the worship, the following are some of its.
- Flower, fruit, coconut, betel nut, leaf of plants and trees such as Toulouse, neem, bilipatra, leaf of banana plant (for Katha) etc.
- Water, honey, curd, panchadravya, camphor, alcohol, Agni (fire), etc.
- Grains like rice, wheat, etc. Rice is an essential for any worship or any rituals.

(B) Animal sacrificing: (Bali in Sanskrit)

- Meat, liver, blood or another organ of animals.
- Animal like Hen, buffalos, goats, horse, etc.

In Nepal, there were news of the Hindu Goddess Gadhimai festival; she is honored every five years with the slaughter of 250000 animals. Animal sacrificing mass occurs during the three day long Gadhimai festival, in Nepal. In 2009, it was speculated that more than 250000 animals were killed while 5 million devotees attended the festivals. There were also prevailed practices of offering of animals in India, which can easily see

---

90www.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadhimaifestival.
various scriptures.” (Wikipedia: Gadhimai festival) “The sacrificing of Horse in Ashvamedh Yagna was very common in ancient time. In the Vedas, there is mention of animal sacrifice, such as mantras for the sacrifice of a goat in the Rig.” (Wikipedia: Animal sacrifice in Hinduism.) The Ashvamedha in which a horse is sacrificed is described Rigveda, Shukla Yajurveda, Taittiriya Yajurveda, Shatapatha Brahamana and the sraut-sutra of the Aitareya Brahamana and Kausthtikati Brahmana of the Rigveda.” (Wikipedia: Animal Sacrifice in Hinduism.)

(C) Human and parts of body offering:

Sometime, there is also seen some news of this type of sacrificing i.e. human sacrificing. Mostly children are sacrificing for their purpose. Hence it is a cruelty of sacrificing any living animal, but it is a social reality of the past.

❖ ‘Kamal Puja’:

There were also seen some examples of self sacrificing on head in the temple. It is known as ‘Kamal Puja’ in old literature of culture. It was done for the blessing of the god/goddess or kuladevi.

❖ There were also seen some examples of sacrificing of man who possesses thirty two virtues (Batris lakshan) for the general welfare. We can see such example of Vir Maya in Patan (Gujarat) for sacrificed for getting of water in Sahasrtaling Lakes at the time of Chalukya King Siddhraj.

❖ Offering of virgin Girl: The Devadasi system was an example of offering a girl and it was very common in India, mostly south India. There were also proof of devadasis were in Somnath temples.

❖ Sati system:

The Sati system was prevailed in India and it was believed necessary for women of such castes (varns). They were not only getting respect at that time, but also attained status of Devi after the ritual. We can still see today, such type of temples in India. There was also seen glorification of the sati in the scriptures of the Hindu religion and their power was believed mightier than Devas.

(5) A Hindu practice (Rituals) combines:

‘Hindu practices’ is the sum of Samskars, Vratas, Pujas, and Customs etc.

1) **Samskars:**

   Samskars are: Vivaha, Garbhadana, Pumsavana, Simantonayan, Jatakaranam, Namakaranam, Niskramana, Annaprasana, Chaula, and Upanayana. Etc.

2) **Vratas:** Vratas are observance of sacred Tithis such as Amavasya, pournami, Chaturthi, Sashti, Ekadasi, Trayodashi etc.

3) **Pujas:** Pujas are for deities like Ganesha, Krishna, Saraswati, Durga, Shiva, Rama, Hanuman, Skanda, Durga, etc.

4) **Customs:** Customs are an important part of every religion. There are many customs prevailed in Hinduism. It also differs from region to region and caste to caste. Customs are related with socio-religious life, dress, greeting, ornament, marriage to death, etc. But their base mostly lies in the scriptures.

5) **Festival and fair ceremonies:**

   India is called the country of festivals and fairs. There are many festivals and fairs are celebrated throughout the year. Hindu festivals are celebrated on the base of the lunar calendar, which is known as ‘Panchang’. They are related to the celebration of harvesting, seasons, god, etc. The festivals may be observed with various acts like to offer to the deities or local deity, prayers, new attires, dance, music, processions, etc. There is great importance of festivals of Diwali, Holi, Shivaratri, Uttarayan etc. Some fairs are also famous and people are very eager to its celebration. They are ‘Kumbh Mela’, ‘Shivaratri Mela’ etc.

1.3.3.15 The Social function of Rituals:

   The function and purpose of rituals are varied. The rituals have purposes and without any function it is not called rituals. We know that rituals are a set of actions and performed mainly for their symbolic value. Each ritual has special meanings and function; it may be religious, social, economical or political. So, the social function of rituals has often been exploited for political ends. The followings are functions of rituals.
(1) Rituals can organize, reinforce and express the shared values, norms and beliefs of a society.

(2) Rituals can help to create social bonds and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Hence it can promote social cohesion.

(3) Rituals can create a firm sense of group identity.

(4) Rituals provide moral and religious education.

(5) Rituals legitimate the code of conduct; the member of society can get the social acceptance by performing the ritual. It can help to reproduce the social order.

(6) Rituals can fulfil emotional needs and strengthen social bonds among the group or society.

(7) The main function of ritual is an accumulation of ‘punya’ for this world or reducing sufferings in the next world.

(8) \[92\] The function of ritual in the community is that of providing the proper rules for action in the realm of the sacred as well as supplying a bridge for passing into the realm of profane.” (Encyclopedia Britannica article)

(9) \[93\] “Ritual also provides an avenue for expression of emotional unity and open declaration that members have absolute commitment to the supernatural being which is being worshipped.” (NOUN: p.34)

(10) \[94\] “Rituals bring the faithful together for mutual stimulation and motivation and for reaffirming their belief in the power of the sacred object of worship.” (NOUN: p.34)

(11) \[95\] “Rituals marking the symbolic transition from one social position to another.”(Glossary: Rites of passage).

The function of Hindu rituals:

(1) The main function is to acknowledge his religious duties, which is called (Dharma),

(2) The second important function is to uphold social institutions and religious values.

\[92\] www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/504688/ritual/66240/Functions-of-ritual

\[93\] CTH 352, Sociology of religions, p. 34, National Open University of Nigeria.

\[94\] Ibid.

(3) The member of caste accepts his position or status or identity in the social order with humility as a consequence of his previous actions (karma) in the past lives.

(4) By performing rituals the member of the society (Yajaman) can earn ‘punya’ for himself or his family or his group.

(5) The key function is of all becomes a refined and religious individual qualified to transcend his lower nature and awaken in his higher.

(6) Through rituals the member confirms his obedience to divinities and commitment to divine centered religious life.

**Concept of Empowerment:**

1.3.4.0 Concept of Empowerment:

The word Empowerment is not a new word and used not only in the social sciences, but also in the speech of the leaders. Hence it can be said that using of it is too much, so we cannot get the original meaning and become confused. Yet, the researcher got the memory of C. E. M. Jode who compared socialism with a ‘shapeless hat’. Hence ‘hat of socialism’ has lost its original shape due to worn by all. Empowerment is like socialism and the meaning of its variable. Yet, Empowerment is used for the uplift of poor, women or marginalized groups.


Now, we can try to get some definition and meaning of it.

---


97 Ibid, p.4.
1.3.4.1 Definition of Empowerment:

Some Definition of Empowerment:

(A) According to Oxford dictionary the meaning of empowers is:

(a1) “Give (someone) the authority or power to do something.”

(a2) “Make stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.” (oxforddictionaries.com).

(B) According to English dictionary for learners the meaning of empower is:

99 “The empowerment of a person or group of people is the process of giving them power and status in particular situation.” (mobil-dictionary.reverso.net.)

(C) “Empowerment is the process of enhancing capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process is actions which both builds individual and collective assets, and improves the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.” (worldbank.org)

(D) “At the core of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power. The possibility of empowerment depends on two things. First, empowerment requires that power can change. If the power cannot change, if it is inherent in positions of people, then empowerment is not possible, nor is empowerment conceivable in any meaningful way. In other words, if the power can change, then empowerment is possible. Second, the concept of empowerment depends upon the idea that power can expand.” (joe.org).

(E) According to Beteille, “empowerment is related to a certain context in Indian society. In a nutshell, that context is the contradiction between a hierarchical social order and a democratic political system.” (Joseph: p.26)

(F) “Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society in terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights.” (Oxfam: 1995).

98 www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/English/empower.
99 www.mobil-dictionaty.reverso.net/english/empowerment.
100 www.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTEMP.
Kabeer (2001) defines empowerment as “The expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.”

**Operational Definition of Empowerment:**
The following three definitions are believed as the operational definitions.

- **Concludes of the above definitions:**
  Empowerment is the process which giving the power to individuals or groups (powerless) and they have the freedom to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. They can access the resources and get the status of equality and controlling their life and claiming their rights. Central to this process is actions which both builds individual and collective assets, and improves the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.

- **As a general definition, however, we suggest that empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. (joe.org)**

- **106.** The process of gaining control over self, ideology, material and knowledge resources which determine power may be termed empowerment. Thus the process of gaining control over resources is to be seen within the given context of deprivation, structure of hierarchy and the process of legitimization and reproduction. The civil societies try to ensure the equal access to the resources to the marginalized community that determines power equation within the society. (Empowerment of the marginalized.Sociology/Guide.htm)

**1.3.4.2 Key Elements of Empowerment:**
Measurement of empowerment is a difficult task and its standard strategies or single institutional model is not possible. According to, ‘Empowerment-

---

104 Kabeer, N., ‘Research agency, Achievement: Reflection on The Measurement of women’s empowerment.’
However, perceptions of being empowered vary across time, culture and domains of a person’s life. The four key elements of empowerment that must underlie institutional reform are:

- Access to information
- Inclusion and participation
- Accountability
- Local organizational capacity.

1.3.4.3 Some important terms of Empowerment:

The ability to exercise choice:

According to N. Kabeer (p. 435), ‘the ability to exercise choice incorporates three interrelated dimensions: Resources, agency and achievements.’

(i) Resources: Defining broadly to include not only access, but also future claims to both material and human and social resources.

(ii) Agency: Including processes of decision making as well as less measurable manifestations of agencies such as negotiation, deception and manipulation.

(iii) Achievements: Well-being outcomes.”

Resources: (pre-conditions), Agency: (process) and Achievements: (outcomes).

1.3.4.4 Meanings of Empowerment:

1) Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building. Empowered people have freedom of choice and action. This in turn enables them to better influence the course of their lives and the decisions which affect them. Empowerment is a process of increasing autonomy and freedom.

2) It is the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power. Kabeer includes both the process and agency elements in his definition and the important thing is he distinguishes empowerment from the general concept of power.

3) It is leading to greater participation and decision-making powers and control, and to transformative action.

4) According to the World Bank (‘Empowerment-overview),’ “In essence empowerment speaks to self determined change. It implies bringing together the supply and demand sides of development-changing the
environment within which poor people live and helping them build and capitalize on their own attributes. Empowerment is a crosscutting issue. From education and health care to governance and economic policy, activities which seek to empower poor people are expected to increase development opportunities, enhance development outcomes and improve people’s quality of life.”

In short, we conclude that... Empowerment is the process, which is not providing only basic needs and security, but also extends its boundaries where the disadvantaged group can achieve social, political, civil and cultural rights of the egalitarian society or modern democratic society. These rights are denied to the marginalized group on the base of any organization or social structure (Agency). It requires sharing, distribution or redistribution of power. They become a part of decision making and using their ability; they can control their own life for the uplift (Self, group and community) and occupy socio-religious space.

1.3.4.5 Types of Empowerment. (Scheduled Castes):

Socio-cultural Empowerment:

107“Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty. Poor people’s empowerment, and their ability to hold others to account, is strongly influenced by their individual assets (such as land, housing, livestock, savings) and capabilities of all types: human (such as good health and education), social (such as social belonging, a sense of identity, leadership relations) and psychological (self esteem, self-confidence, the ability to imagine and aspire to a better future). Also important are people’s collective assets and capabilities, such as voice, organization, representation and identity.” (gsdrc.org)

Basic needs of the human being must be satisfied. But man is a social animal; hence social existence is also important. The status of the Scheduled

supplements/social-and-economic-empowerment.
Castes is the lowest in the fourfold Varnashram system. Their position is the last on the ladder of Caste structure. Their behavior is controlled by the various agencies of the Hinduism. Their occupation is fixed; it may be a traditional menial work of agricultural labor. They are denied for most of the basic rights and not allowed to the religious activity. They cannot perform Hindu rituals which believed sacred. They are not taking part in important social and religious celebration of the Hinduism. They are discriminated in most of the fields of life. Untouchability is removed by the legal system, but it prevails in Indian society.

The following points are important for the Socio-cultural Empowerment.

1. **Freedom of movement:** (Public places like street, temple, well, pond, Panchayats office, etc.) To make an association and support to self interests.

2. **Opportunities for social activities and support of various agencies:** Role of the various agencies is very important. (Religion, Panchayats, elite, dominant caste etc...). An opportunity of being a member of Panchayats, or become the trustee of an institute or head of the important public or private institute.

- **Easy access to social spaces:** At individual level or community level: (Access of public places like street, temple, well, pond, Panchayats office, funeral house etc.

- **Ownership and Control of various resources:** Such as, Land, water, assets, temple, road, garden, park, important public places, etc.

- **Inclusion,** representation and role in decision making process in various socio-religious activities.

- **Participant in religious activities:** Ritual performance, festival celebration, fair celebration, various Yatra or procession etc.

- **Status and Participant in social activities of so called upper castes:** As for examples: Marriage, death, important Social celebration etc.

- **Inclusion in Housing, funeral, house and other cultural activities:** The Scheduled Castes can access the residence area of the non-Scheduled Castes. They can also access the common funeral house and other cultural activities. Hence, the aim of is this empowerment is to build up
social capabilities, social status and opportunities among individuals, classes and communities.

**Economic Empowerment:**

108“Economic empowerment is thought to allow poor people think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life chances.” (gsdrc.org). The Scheduled Castes have very limited opportunities for economic empowerment. They are traditionally forced to do menial work and the wages of this work are very low. They are not accepted in any trade activity and have not accessed any facility or opportunity of other skill work. They have no land and most of the people are agriculture labor. Hence, they are denied to use main street or road of the village for social or religious activity. So it is impossible to do any other economic activity for their livelihoods. There is not possibility of Irrigation of their land. However the access of resources is very limited. Economy is the base of development and empowerment. Hence the following points are important for the economic empowerment of the Scheduled Castes.

- Freedom of occupation.
- Opportunities of economic activities and support of various agencies. The Role of the various agencies is also important. (Religion, Panchayats, elite, dominant caste etc...)
- Easy access to resources on employment (trade, market, etc.) Economic growth of the community directly develops such development which helps other empowerment.
- Ownership and Control of various resources: Land, water, assets, road, important public places.
- Inclusion, representation and role in decision making activities.

**Political Empowerment:**

Power is the source of all empowerment and redistribution of power is the main goal of empowerment. Hence the disadvantaged groups can access

---

power and extend their capabilities, enter into the world of opportunities. Hence the Scheduled Castes are marginalized and not given any opportunities in the decision making field. However, they are enslaved from the centuries in the name of religion and avoided their social existence by the agencies of Hinduism. They are denied human rights and forced to do forced labor or menial works. However, they also have less population, so they cannot demand of political power. They have not given any representation, in any agency who gives power. Even today they can access become the member or sarapanch in Panchayats or other institutes. But the accessing of power is a daydream for them. In the state government or central government they can get fixed portfolio like Social Justice (Social welfare) or less important departments. They can represent from only reserve constituency (reserve category). They cannot get become head of any important institutes or department. They have not any lobbying groups and they cannot access their self-interests. Hence the following points are important for their empowerment.

- To acquire knowledge of the political system and it’s functioning.
- To get representation in various political institutes and use their power.
- Accepting as a candidate on the base of capabilities not based on the caste.
- To get support for decision making portfolio or get an important post in the party or creamy institutes/boards/public companies.
- To satisfy self interests of the community and make a strength of Voting Bank. The capability of becoming a pressure group as a community level and capability for lobbing to get self interests or key posts.

**Psychological Empowerment:**

The marriage system is a reflection of the Indian society. Arrange marriage is still common in Indian society, but while one observes the choice system of bride/groom, it gives proof of castism. There is no opportunity of getting bride or groom for the Scheduled Castes from the dominant castes or so called the upper castes. Honor killing is the best choice for the upper castes instead of marriage in the Scheduled Castes. Mobilization with freedom for the Scheduled Castes is not possible in India even today. Changes in the mindset of the individual level and community level are very important. The role of
various socio-cultural and religious agencies of Hinduism is traditional; hence they would not try to change the mindsets of people. They have only an interest to maintain the interests of the upper castes. Hence, the people of the Scheduled Castes cannot get psychological well-being. Even they are educated and economically empowered; they cannot be participating in social-religious activities. They are living with a psychological feeling of the castism and avoiding accessing of such activities or celebration. The Scheduled Castes cannot get respect and dignity in the Hinduism.

The following points are important for their empowerment.

- **Freedom of movement:** To free from any psychological fear or prejudices of castism. Their feeling of equality in accessing public places, such as street, temple, well, pond, panchayats offices etc.
- **Equal opportunities for social activities and support of various agencies for the development of the individual.** The role of the various agencies is also important. (Religion, Panchayats, elite, dominant caste etc...)
- **Providing education and training for the enhancing skills of the individual.**
- **Easy access to social spaces with self esteem:** At individual level or community level: (Access of public places like street, temple, well, pond, Panchayats office, funeral house etc.)
- **To get an opportunity of to being a part of the member of Panchayats or trustee of an institute or head of the important public or private institute.**
- **To make an association and support to self interests, campaigns for rights awareness; and capability of becoming pressure groups.** A collective awareness of injustice and strength of forced into taking action against it.
- **Ownership and Control of various resources enhances their self-esteem and self efficacy.** (Land, water, assets, temple, road, important public places.)
- **Inclusion, representation and role in decision making in social and religious activities.**
- **Participant in socio-religious activities (ritual performance, festival celebration etc.)**
Behavior and equal treatment in social-religious activities of so called upper castes. (As for examples: Marriage, death, important Social celebration etc.)

Freedom of getting the house in the desired area, access of social spaces without any social-religious prejudices. (Marriage hall, dharmashala of religious places, funeral, and house, sacred places etc.)

Educational Empowerment:

The Scheduled Castes is living as the untouchable in Hinduism for centuries. They cannot get respect and dignity in the Hinduism. Hence, they are enslaved and forced to live in the dependence of the upper castes. But after the entry of colonial education in India, very few have got an education and they have tested some fruits of life. Dr. Ambedkar is one of the members of that family who have tasted the fruits of the education. And there is a unique history of Dr. Ambedkar who has played the crucial role in changing the life of all the disadvantaged groups. Hence Educational Empowerment is the key element of the process of empowerment of the Scheduled Castes. Dr. Ambedkar said, ‘be educated, be organized and be agitated.’ Education is the key of knowledge and it can change life. Jyotirao Phule said,

“Lack of education leads to lack of wisdom, which leads to lack of morals, which leads to lack of progress, which leads to lack of money, which leads to the oppression of the lower classes. See what the state of the society one lacks of education can cause.” (mahatmaphule.com). Hence, education is the basic needs of development of human mind. The Scheduled Castes have no rights of education and if someone has tried for it, there is cruel punishment for him. Education can give proper knowledge, skills and shows a way for changing the life. It also gives self-awareness and gives opportunities of individual development. The following points are important for their empowerment.

- Equality of getting Education.
- Providing education and training for the enhancing skills of the individual.
- Inclusion, representation and role in decision making related to educational activities.
Equal opportunities for social activities and support of various agencies for the development of the individual. The role of the various agencies is also important. (Religion, Panchayats, elite, dominant caste etc...)

To change the traditional mindset of the people and social acceptance of the educated people without any social-religious prejudices.

Easy access to social spaces without any discrimination: At individual level or community level: (Access of public places like street, temple, well, pond, Panchayats office, funeral house etc.)

Status: To get an opportunity of to being a part of the member of Panchayats or trustee of an institute or head of the important public or private institution and access to the higher status after education.

1.3.4.6 Empowerment of the Scheduled Castes:

Empowerment is a dynamic process and concern with the Scheduled Caste; we must remember that the Scheduled Caste is a disadvantaged group for a thousand years. Hence it is disempowered group in all the fields like social, religious, political, economic, psychological, etc., and control of resources is a dream for them. However the pathway of empowerment is difficult for the Scheduled Caste. Hence the social fact of Indian society is that the behavior of people is shaped by religion practices; beliefs, attitudes and values of social structures; policies and systems of various institutes. Hence it states that the Scheduled Castes cannot be empowered without changing in the religion or social structure or traditional institutes.

According to Sahay, Empowerment of women includes: (Haokip Tinkhonei: Thesis, p. 61) In the thesis entitled, ‘A Sociological study of the status and process of empowerment of women among the major Tribal and Non-Tribal communities in Manipur State,’ Haokip Tinkhonei referred Sahay.

According to Sahay, the empowerment includes women,
1) Recognizing womwn’s contribution, women’s knowledge.
2) Helping women fight, their own fears, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

Tinkhonei, Haokip. ‘A Sociological study of the Status and Process of Empowerment of Women among the major Tribal and Non-Tribal communities in Manipur State, p.61.’
3) Women enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity.
4) Women controlling their own bodies.
5) Women becoming economically independent and self-reliant.
6) Women controlling resources like land and property.
7) Reducing women’s burden of work, especially within the home, and
8) Promoting qualities of nurturing, caring, gentleness, not just in women but also in men.

However, the pathway of empowerment of women and the Scheduled Castes is not much difference. The basic elements are same; hence the above features can be also used for the any disadvantaged groups like the Scheduled Castes. It can be written in this way:

**Empowerment of the Scheduled Castes includes:**

1) Recognizing the Scheduled Castes’ contribution, the Scheduled Castes’ knowledge.
2) Helping the SCs fight, their own fears, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.
3) Scheduled Castes enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity.
4) Scheduled Castes controlling their own bodies. (Reference to the untouchability)
5) Scheduled Castes becoming economically independent and self-reliant.
6) Scheduled Castes controlling resources like land and property.
7) Reducing/Escape the Scheduled Castes’ traditional occupation work, especially related menial work, and
8) Promoting qualities of life, new occupational skills in the Scheduled Castes and develop sensitivity in the heart of non-Scheduled Castes.

**Empowerment and Scheduled Castes:**

According the researcher, the following features are necessary for the empowerment.

(A) **Individual level:**
- Gaining power and control over decisions that determine the quality of one’s life.
- Gaining power and control over resources that determine the quality of one’s life.
- Socio-Religious acceptance.

(B) **Community level:**
- Remove Structural inequalities.
- Equality of opportunities.
Socio-Religious acceptance.

(C) Whole Society level:

- Inclusion and participation in social-Religious fields of life.
- Participation in Socio-Religious fields of life.
- Role in Decision making process of whole society in all fields of life.
- Representation in all agencies. (Socio-Religious, economic, political, media etc.):

Through empowerment is conceived in its different dimensions such as socioeconomic, political and cultural, the centrality of the political realm as the core idea of empowerment should be analyzed. The centrality of notion of empowerment is located in the dynamics of the legitimate sharing, distribution and redistribution of power.

This empowerment is explained as sharing the benifits of power with certain underprivileged sections of society who are alienated from the decision-making process. Many scholars think of empowerment as participation in decision-making on vital issues relating to the disempowered subjects. Decision-making is a central instance where and when power is used, including the power to influence the behaviour and choices of others. Thus empowerment though linked to social, economic and cultural dimensions, is essentially a political strarategy and process.”

In Short, Empowerment of the all disadvantaged groups is:

“The process of gaining control over self, ideology, material and knoweldge resources which determine power may be termed empowerment. Thus, the process of gaing control over resources is to be seen within the given context of deprivation, structure of hierarchy and the process of legitimization and reproduction.

The civil societies try to ensure the equal acces to the resources to the marginalized community that determines power equation within the society.”

1.3.5 The Scheduled Castes:

1.3.5.1 Introduction:

The caste system is the backbone of Indian society, even, Gandhiji believed that the untouchability is a greatest blot on Hinduism, but he also

believed in ‘Varanashram’ which is the cause of the Caste system. However the caste system divides Indian society into such groups (and sub-groups) which ranked by ritual status determined by birth and governed by the principles of ritual purity and pollution of Hindu scriptures. Every caste is bound to do its traditional occupation. Where the Scheduled Castes are at the lowest rung of this ladder and enforced to menial work which is believed impure.

In this way, the Scheduled Caste is the community or a group of people, which is believed as untouchable in Hinduism. It must be noted that the Scheduled Castes are not a part of the Shudra, but they are called ‘Pancham Varn.’ Their position is below of these so called four Varn-groups. They are called untouchable and their status is below from not only dominant castes, but also from the other castes. So, the interrelations of Scheduled caste with other castes are limited by the duties of menial works.

On one side the Scheduled Castes is believed outcast of the Hindu religion, but the other side their duties, behavior are sanctioned by the law of ‘Varnashram.’ Hence, they are included in Hinduism and forced to do that work which are believed profane (menial work, dirty work). Through being a part of the Hindu religion, they are excluded from the all walks of life, such as religious, political, economical; media etc. means all important fields of life. In short, they are included, but denied most of the fundamental rights. They are most disadvantaged socioeconomic groups of India.

**First use of the Scheduled Caste:**

In the book entitled ‘Scheduled Castes of India Dimensions of Social Change,’ the author Soran Singh referred the Government of India act 1935, according to him, 111 “The word Scheduled Caste was first coined by the Simon Commission and incorporated in the Government of India Act 1935, Section 279. During a celebrated temple entry campaign in 1922, Gandhi bestowed on the untouchables the new name of ‘Harijan,’ meaning thereby the children of God, which he took from a poem by a sage in his native place Gujarat.” (Soran Singh, p.3. 1987)

1.3.5.2 Definition of the Scheduled Castes:

(1) Article 341 of the Indian constitution gives the definition of the Scheduled Castes. According the clause, the “Scheduled Castes”- “castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes”, which the President, by public notification, specify to be “Scheduled Castes in relation to that State or Union Territory.” (Annual Report 2014-15: p.2)

(2) The “Scheduled Castes” is the legal and constitutional name collectively given to the groups which have traditionally occupied the lowest status in Indian society and the Hindu religion which provides the religious and ideological basis for an “untouchable” group, which was outside the caste system and inferior to all other castes. Today, untouchability is outlawed, and these groups are recognized by the Indian Constitution to be especially disadvantaged because of their past history of inferior treatment, and are therefore entitled to certain rights and preferential treatment.” (faqs.org)

Operational Definition of the Scheduled Castes:

The Constitution gives the definition of the Scheduled Castes, so it is accepted as an operational definition of the Scheduled Castes. It is said that the Scheduled Castes is the socioeconomic disadvantaged groups which generally known as an ‘untouchable’ in Indian society; and the Hindu religion sanctioned it and given lowest status and menial job; and forced to live the outskirt area of the village. These groups are a victim of inferior treatment in all fields of life in Indian society and it is recognized as the Scheduled Castes in Indian constitution today.

1.3.5.3 Some important Constitutional provisions for the SCs:

(A) Social Safeguards: Article 17

“Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes untouchability, forbids its practice in any form, and declares enforcement of any disability arising out of “untouchability” to be an offense punishable in accordance with the law.” (Annual Report 2014-15: p.5)

(B) Educational and Public Employment Safeguards:

---

113 www.faqs.org/minorities/South-Asia/Scheduled-Castes-of-India.html.
Article 46: Promotion of educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections: “The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.” (Annual Report 2014-15: p.5)

Article 16 (4A) speaks of “reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of SCs/STs, which are not adequately represented in the services under the State.” (sje.Gujarat)


The following articles of the Indian constitution provide political safeguards of the SCs.

1) “Article 330: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the people.”

2) “Article 332: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.”

3) “Article 243 D: Reservation of seats in Panchayats.”

4) Article 243 T: Reservation of seats in Municipalities.”

(D) Agency for monitoring safeguards of the Scheduled Castes:

Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC):

Article 338 provides for the constitution of a National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), to, inter-alia, “investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes” in the Constitution, any law, or order of the Government, and “to evaluate the working of such safeguards.” Further, as per clause (9) of this Article, “the Union and every State Government shall consult the commission on all major policy matters affecting the Scheduled Castes.” (Annual Report 2014-15: p.5)

---

117 Ibid.
1.4 Objectives of the Study:

The following are the main objectives of the research:

- To examine the general status of the Scheduled Castes in Hindu ritual and to assess the impact of Hindu ritual on empowerment of the Scheduled Castes.
- The key objective is to check the role of the Hindu Ritual in enhancing the opportunities of the freedom, social justice and fraternity as per our constitution given.
- The research will draw an attention in the participation and role of the Scheduled Castes in the performance of the Hindu ritual. It will also check in the context of individual and group level.
- To get the knowledge of the rituals of the Scheduled Castes and explore in the mainstream.

1.5 Area of Research:

“Most of the scholars of sociology of religion have given much concentration to study about how religion functions for the individual and in society. Yet, “religion can also serve as filter for examining other issues in society and other components of culture.” (Openstax: p.338)

The view of the study of religion in India is structural perspective. Some researcher also tries to glorify a caste system as a unique social structure of Hinduism. They believe caste system is an ideal system, castism is an evil of the Hinduism, but they are not giving any solutions to separate the caste system and castism. But they are avoiding reality of the Indian society because the existence of the caste system is a root of castism. Indeed, there is not given much importance to the dysfunction of the Hindu religion. There was also give important to the study of beliefs and rituals of Hindu religion and unique identities as a world religion. But, how the life of untouchable is exploited by the dominant caste is not deeply studied. Most of the social scientists have studied about the untouchability and other issues, but not given the importance that how it originated and legitimated by the rituals and beliefs of the Hindu religion. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar showed that how the Manusmriti
and other texts supported the untouchability and the practical life of the untouchable is affected by the beliefs of Hinduism.

**Geographical Area of Research:**

The impact of norms, beliefs and customs are more prevalent in the rural people than urban people. But the researcher wanted to choose the urban area for research. And before some year Ahmedabad has got the status metro city. Ahmedabad is the heart of the Gujarat and influences all social, political, cultural, religious etc. activities of the Gujarat. It is very wide and extended its boundaries in a few months ago. So the Geographical area of this research is Ahmedabad city.

1.6 **Importance of the Study:**

(1) The results of research would contribute to the literature by highlighting the reality of the relationship of the Hindu rituals and empowerment of the Scheduled Caste.

(2) From the finding, it would help to give the information about beliefs, values and traditions of people of Hindu religion towards the SCs. It would tell the source of inspiration and attitude of people indirectly. It’ concludes would be helpful to know such source of the people of the empowerment and impacts of Manusmruti or the Constitution of India on it.

(3) This research would be exploring the various aspects of the relation between the Hindu ritual and the Scheduled Castes. One can see the multiple effects of the rituals on the Indian caste system; and its effects on India today. So it will provide details about the role of rituals to access the status, privileges, power and wealth for the Scheduled Castes.

(4) It will also help to understand why various empowerment programmes of the Scheduled Caste done by various government and nongovernment agencies are not succeeding.

(5) It will also find the role of the rituals in the life of the SCs and it can also help to get knowledge of important rituals and ceremonies of the Scheduled Castes.

1.7 **Limitations of the Study.**

1) Hindu rituals became a part of life and woven with norms, beliefs and customs in such a way that the respondent’s cannot think about it
scientifically. Means the respondents cannot apply his reasonable attitude about it. So it is tough and time taking task to get information.

2) The respondents of the research were selected from the Ahmedabad city, so it covered only urban area. However, it is the reality that the impact of norms, beliefs and customs are more prevalent in the rural people. The researcher was very aware that that urban citizen has more opportunities of the development/empowerment than the rural people. So the intensity of the relation of Hindu rituals and the empowerment will be less measured than actual prevalent in Gujarat.

3) The researcher knows that there are not enough special measurement variables or tools of the empowerment of the SCs. So the researcher has used the traditional ways of the measurement of the empowerment with the help of self made questionnaire.

4) The Scheduled Castes of Gujarat constitutes thirty six sub-castes; the respondents of the study were selected from the main sub-castes only.

5) With small sample size of 324 and purposeful method of sampling, the study does not claim to make generalizations.

6) The finance of the research was not bear by any agency or N.G.O; it is totally expensed by the researcher. (However, at the last stage, the researcher has been awarded of the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) from the June, 2016.)

1.8 Chapterisation:

The present study is divided into five chapters. The following are the title of Chapters.

The first chapter is an introductory chapter and that introduces with the problem of research. It also gives the common understanding of concepts of Hindu samskars, rituals, empowerments, the Scheduled Caste etc. The significance of the study and limitations are given in this chapter.

The second chapter is a review of literature. It started with the conception review of Hindu samskars, empowerment. It also discussed several reviews of books, thesis, articles related to the empowerment and the Scheduled caste. It also gives the details of the originality of the research.
Methodology is the third chapter and it gives complete direction of research. The journey of research is not possible without proper planning. It is very important to build a proper plan of research, so that the researcher can use available resources rationally with accepting his limitations.

The chapter four is the Analysis and Interpretation which give detailed about the respondent, their views on the subject and total analysis of the research. The main core work and hard work of any research is to analyze and give result. Hence, this chapter has two parts. First part gives the general background of the Respondents and the findings of the field study are discussed in other parts. The conclusion is the last chapter where useful conclusions are drawn from the study. It also highlights some suggestions about the empowerment of the Scheduled Castes.

The last chapter is Conclusion and Summary. This chapter combines major findings and conclusion. After analyzing the primary Data certain conclusion are derived. The important findings and useful suggestions are given. Hence at the end of the above chapters, appendixes are given just after Bibliography.