Religion is fundamental to man and man became conscious of some power beyond his comprehension almost at the dawn of civilization. Sociological inquiry into religion has, necessarily, been central to some of the most important works in Sociology, e.g., The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches by E. Troeltsch, 2 vols (1931), The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism by Max Weber (1930), The Elementary Forms of Religious Life by Durkheim (1915). There has, recently, been a resurgence of interest in the sociological studies of religion, as is warranted by the writings of Yinger, Nottingham, Hoult, Luckman, Martin, Wilson and others. Considering this, there is nothing uncommon in Ghurye's concern for sociology of religion. In fact, Ghurye thinks that religion is at the centre of the total cultural heritage of man. This is specially applicable in Hindu society where not only cosmology and cosmography but notions about human personality and social institutions also are related with religion. Ghurye thinks that of the five 'foundations of culture', 'Religious consciousness' is most important and it moulds and directs the behaviour of man in society.


Three works of Ghurye, viz., *Gods and Men*, *Religious Consciousness* and *Indian Sadhus*, are of interest from the standpoint of sociology of religion. In the first work, Ghurye has discussed "the nature of the Hindu ideas of Godhead ... and the relations, if any, between the climate of an age and the type of Godhead favoured." In *Religious Consciousness*, Ghurye analyses the three oldest human civilizations, the Mesopotamian, the Egyptian and the Hindu, in their various aspects - mythological beliefs, speculation, cosmology, life after death, view of Godhead, temple architecture etc. And in *The Indian Sadhus*, Ghurye considers the genesis, development and organization of asceticism in Hindu religion and the role the ascetics have played in the maintenance of Hindu society.

It is true that Ghurye's approach to the problems leaves many things unexplained and the various dimensions of sociology of religion have not been covered by him. In fact, Ghurye has shown surprising lack of concern for the major theoretical issues in the field. He has not mentioned even for once, the names of Durkheim and Max Weber - the two great stalwarts and though the subject became fairly rich in the sixties, we do not get any idea on the major theoretical issues in the field from Ghurye's writings. This is really a great loss for those who are interested in the Indian situation because Ghurye, with his extent and

depth of knowledge in Hinduism, would have been the right man to discuss any theoretical model in relation to India.

Let us take the case of Weber's classic work 'The Religion of India'. Here Weber discusses the broad effects of Hinduism on economic life. Weber is of the opinion that Asian religions, including Hinduism, are so other-worldly and irrational in nature that they create a climate unfavourable for the growth of industrial capitalism in these countries. Weber himself was so sure about this anticapitalist trend of Hinduism that he contended that capitalism would break down with the withdrawal of the British from India. This view regarding the impact of Hinduism on economic growth is shared by some other people also. V. Misra, for example, says, "When the impact of Western industrialization began to be felt in India, these institutions and attitudes began to act as brakes on economic growth."

There has been a volume of discussion on this aspect of Weber's writings. Generally it is accepted that Weber's analysis is somewhat simplistic. Actually, this Weberian thesis was contested as early as in the writings of Benoy Sarkar. Through his celebrated four volumes of Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, Sarkar tried to prove that Indian life had always been based on a secular foundation.

Aggressive materialism and not spiritualism or asceticism constituted the dominant core of Indian society. What is Ghurye's opinion on this aspect? What have been the effects of religious structure on economic and other aspects of society? How can the religious myths be explained with reference to the stark realities of contemporary life? Ghurye does not engage himself into these questions. Only in one of his recent books, Vedic India, he has tried to reconstruct economic and socio-cultural aspects of vedic society with reference to vedic literature. But here too the attempt has not been very successful.

While Weber's approach may be broadly designated as historical-comparative, Durkheim's approach may be said to be analytical-structural. Religion, according to Durkheim, is a consecration of the community. It is the symbol of society. The distinction between the sacred and the profane is ultimately a distinction between what is socially useful and what is not. To substantiate this fundamental thesis, Durkheim studied the structure of beliefs, rites and cult of an aboriginal tribe in Australia. He showed that religious structure works as the great integrative force in human society.

It may appear that Durkheim gave too much importance upon the social role of religion. The value of Max Weber's sociology lies in the fact that it stands as a corrective against this one sidedness. To Max Weber, religion is the operative cause of social change, though he also

10 For a brilliant discussion on this aspect, see, D.D. Kosambi - 'Myth and Reality' (Popular : 1962).
believes that social and economic conditions similarly exercise their influence on religion. Weber insisted that purely religious phenomena, even elements of theoretical thought, could sometimes have important consequences far beyond the area of religion itself. The most famous instance of this is Weber's theory of the relationship between Protestantism and what he called the 'spirit of capitalism'. Weber tried to apply the same scheme in case of India which, as we have seen, in spite of its value, cannot be accepted in toto.

Where does Ghurye fit in this theoretical world? Perhaps nowhere. And if at all, with Durkheim, but not very explicitly. Though occasionally the social factor comes in his discussion, the major point of emphasis in his study is the analysis of religious texts as literary documents and not as social documents. Certainly, there can be a sociological treatment of these documents. Veena Das, for example, in her study of two caste puranas, has shown how the purpose of these two puranas (viz, Mallapurana and the Kalika Purana) has been to support the claims of the Jethimallas and Coppersmiths to be Brahmins and Kshatriyas respectively. Ghurye does not make any such attempt in a systematic manner. For example, there is a chapter in his book Religious Consciousness entitled 'Hindu View of Human Personality'. Ghurye has provided there an excellent base material which can be put to good use by a sociologist but our point is that his treatment has not been sociological. That is

15 See the article by Berger in Smelser (ed.) - Sociology: An Introduction (1967), pp. 343-52.
our main criticism against Ghurye. Jouman says, sociology of religion is not concerned with the essence of faith but with the role of faith and of its public avowal in social life. 18

But perhaps we are giving too much premium on the negative factor, on what Ghurye is not than on what he is. There are certain definite senses in which Ghurye's treatment of Hindu religion is sociologically relevant. One of these is the point which we have just said - if Ghurye has provided facts and documents which provide excellent base material for a sociologist, then that should be considered as a no mean achievement. This is particularly credible because Ghurye was the first to undertake this type of endeavour. 19

There is another sense in which Ghurye's analysis becomes sociologically relevant. Any student of Indology knows that Hinduism, particularly the Brahmanic version of it, passed through a career of long vicissitudes. In fact, for a major part of the period, Hinduism had been deprived of royal patronage. It has survived the attacks of the Buddhists, the Jains, the foreign invaders and lastly about seven hundred years of Muslim rule. The structure of Hinduism is so vast and diverse that it calls for systematic analysis of this heterogeneity and the factors which account for it. The variation in Hinduism is both regional and sect-linked. The territorial variation in Hinduism is very important. Srinivas has classified Hinduism in several categories from this standpoint,

18 F. Vrijhof - 'What is Sociology of Religion?' in Joan Brothers (ed.) op.cit., p. 45.
19 M.N. Srinivas has corroborated this view in a personal interview with the present author.
viz, All-India Hinduism, North Indian Hinduism and Peninsular Hinduism and Regional Hinduism. Intensive micro-studies of Hinduism in recent times have revealed the enormous diversity of Hinduism at the village level. Dube says, "Village Hinduism is not easy to describe. It is an extremely elastic religion and within its All-India framework admits of a considerable degree of regional and local variation." The diversities of sects in Hinduism are also enormous and their emergence and spread ought to be studied from the historical standpoint. There are five broad sects in Hinduism, viz, Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, Smarta and Tantrik and within each category, there are a number of sub-sects. So this diverse and complex nature of Hinduism provides a fascinating area of study for sociologists and anthropologists. And the task is challenging also. K.S. Mathur has said, "The diversity of beliefs, philosophies, creeds, dogmas, rites and ceremonies and social practices prevalent among the people of this great country, however, preclude any precise definition of Hinduism." Ghurye's preoccupation is to discuss the cultural traits of this very complex religious system. Analysis of this religious structure itself is important from sociological standpoint. It is in this sense that Goldschmidt includes, in his formulation of the sociology of religion, analysis of not religious behaviour only, but also of religious

contents. In connection with Christianity, he asks, "What is the immutable core, the *Kerygma*, of the Christian message when one relates it socially not only to the form and content of religion but also to Christian beliefs, Church ways and Church-dominated modes of behaviour?"\textsuperscript{23} In so far as Gundry has done it in relation to Hinduism, the discussion becomes relevant from the standpoint of sociology of religion.

\textsuperscript{23} Quoted by P. Vrijhof-'What is the Sociology of Religion?' in Joan Brothers (ed.) - *op.cit.*, p. 36.
Section - 2

EVOLUTION AND ROLE OF GOD-HEADS IN HINDU SOCIETY

Some sort of religious consciousness is as old as the start of man's sojourn on this planet. Confronted with a mysterious and sometimes hostile world, man creates God in his own image and ascribes to Him personality type and functions which meet his social necessities. There is a Greek saying that animals like horses and oxen would have created horse-Gods and oxen-Gods respectively if they could fashion their Gods at all. God making process is thus essentially confined within the racial form and experience of the God-makers. Here is then an excellent field which can be studied from the sociological standpoint. Ghurye's ideas on this point may be found in his Gods and Men (1962), Religious Consciousness (1965), Indian Acculturation (1977), Vedic India (1979) and The Legacy of the Ramayana (1979). Of course, his Gods and Men may be regarded as a true sociological treatise of Hindu religion. Ghurye says about the book, "I consider (it) to be one of my most original books. In it, in attempting to unravel some of the interactions and inter-connections between religion and what is called an idolatrous society with an idolatrous religion, I have turned the light of anthropology and ethics on some of the concepts and episodes occurring in Hindu religious literature."25

Ghurye notes that theomorphism or the postulation of animal form Gods is a very important cultural trait of Hinduism. Vishnu's animal incarnations, the animal preponderance among the group-followers of Siva.

the existence of animal mounts or vehicles of human Gods, the deification of Siva's bull - all these testify this phenomenon. What accounts for this association of animals with Gods in Hindu religion? Ghurye says that it is an indicator of a long process of acculturation whereby the Indo-Aryans adopted some of the totem-like features of religion of the indigenous people in India. It was also a gesture whereby the incoming aryans tried to assuage the bitter feelings of the vanquished people and presented a sort of composite culture. But it may be noted here that Ghurye's view in this respect is not entirely correct. The association of animals with Gods is nothing peculiar to India. In ancient Egypt and in the kingdoms of the fertile crescent, we find animals being given a very sacred status, eg., the God ANUBIS in Egypt. So theriomorphism as a cultural trait was rather imported from outside by the incoming Aryans and then, perhaps they adjusted it to the local situation.

Ghurye says that the position of God is dependent on the character of the contemporary society. This may be established with reference to the shifting status of Indra. During the Rigvedic time, Indra was unquestionably the greatest God. The incoming aryans were still engaged in bitter fights with the local people and they created this warrior-God in order to keep their morale. MacDonell observes that

27 Ghurye - Gods and Men, p. 3.
his attitude towards Indra is a tolerably sure indication of historical sequence. Here the national warrior-God appears as the patron of Aryan migration. But in the latter Upanisadic Age, when there was comparative peace and stability, Indra's status declined as there was no need of worshipping this warrior-God. This is how, Ghurye shows, we can study the nature of society in a particular age with reference to its ideas of God-head.

In Hinduism, from the standpoint of the number of God-heads, we find that there are five principal god-heads around which Hindu religious practices and rituals have evolved. These five deities are Surya, the Siva, Vishnu, Ganesa and the Devi. By studying their evolution we can also form an idea of evolution of Indian culture—the process of unification and differentiation which have gone on for ages. Though various sects have been formed in Hinduism, the difference between them has not been an unbridgeable one. This 'syncretic endeavour' of Hinduism, the principle of 'unity in diversity' holds Hindu society together. This Hindu view of God-head may be called, according to Ghurye, 'nonolatrous pantheism'.

Of these five Gods, the historic process of the rise of Siva has been a source of fertile literature. Ghurye's basic contention is that Rudra-Siva must be considered to be fundamentally a Vedic God. He does not accept the view that phallus-worship, as it was prevalent among the pre-aryan people or in the Indus-Valley Civilization, in any way influenced

29 MacDonell - Vedic Mythology, p. 64.
31 Ghurye - Ibid., p. 256.
32 Ghurye - Gods and Men, pp. 11-49; Vedic India, pp. 115-80.
the creation of this God by the Vedic aryans. Ghurye believes that even the Mohenjodaro Seals, which are believed to contain the engraved feature of Siva, do not definitely prove the prevalence of Siva worship among them.

But, according to Ghurye, the process of development of Rovedic Rudra into Epic-historic Siva was certainly influenced by the indigenous beliefs and practices. It indicates a process of ethnic and regional integration whereby the aryans accepted some of the native beliefs and institutions. In South India also the spread of the Siva cult bears the example of this synthesis process. The widespread acceptance of the images of Siva, Parvati and Skanda as presenting a happy family, helped in the process of acculturation. The patrilocal type of family which was introduced in the South in place of their earlier matrilineal, matrilocal type was sought to be stabilized by this type of Siva-worship.

Regarding the origin of Vishnu, Ghurye thinks that when the institution of Yajna or ritual sacrifices became more and more costly in the late Vedic period, Yajna was anthropomorphized into Vishnu so that people could avoid the costly Yajna rituals. The thing which is sociologically

33 There are evidences to show that Phallus worship was a very widespread cultural trait in ancient times. In Egyptian mythology, it was Isis herself, the primary deity, who established phallus-worship. The recently excavated Goddess shrines in the Near East reveal phalluses of all shapes and sizes. See - Jaquetta Hawkes - The Dawn of the Gods (New York, 1968), p. 131. Also see, B.J. Goldberg, The Sacred Fire (New York, 1930) and Thomas Wright - The Worship of the Generative Powers (London, n.d.). So it is difficult to make any definite conclusion regarding the place of origin of phallus-worship.

34 Ghurye - Vedic India, p. 173.
35 Ghurye - Ibid., p. 164, 178.
36 Ghurye - Gods and Men, p. 89.
37 Ghurye - Vedic India, pp. 103-8., Gods and Men, p. 149.
most relevant in case of Vishnu and which has created enormous influence on our society in every age, is the theory of Vishnu's incarnations. Every Hindu believes that God Vishnu incarnates Himself from age to age to uphold the socio-ethical order. This element of belief has acted "as a solace to the common mass of Hindus in their hours of depression and agony through either foreign religious persecution or through rapid changes in the ethico-religious tempo of the Hindu society."38 For example, the Vijayanagara monarchs while trying to hold high the banner of resurgent Hinduism against muslim conquest, adopted the emblem of Vishnu's Varaha (Boar) incarnation which is the symbol of strength and relief against oppression.39

The two incarnations of Vishnu which have caught people's imagination are Rama and Krishna respectively. Both of them are being worshipped as man-God and their lives and activities have enthralled the minds of millions and millions of Hindus. Ghurye thinks that, of them, Rama's life is more significant from the standpoint of sociology of religion and from the point of acculturation. Rama really came into eminence when the Brahmins recognized him as the incarnation of Vishnu. The Brahmins began to worship him because Rama's strength and prowess was recognized as a symbol of safety for the Brahmins. Rama was also instrumental in spreading Brahmanism in South India.40 The popularization of the institution of joint family also was tremendously influenced by the spread of Rama-cult.41 Again, in the 14th century, the spread of

39 Ghurye - Gods and Men, p. 147, 155-56.
41 Ghurye - Ibid., p. 195.
Rama-cult became an effective antedote against increasing Muslim influence. It also checked the Vaishnabite influence which provided a philosophy of escapism.\textsuperscript{42}

The rise of Ganesa to the stature of supreme Godhood is even more fascinating. Here we find the unique instance of a therianthropic God being given such a high position and yet not being connected with any supreme God.\textsuperscript{43} Ghurye thinks that this supreme position of Ganesa is exclusively a Brahmanic contribution. "He (Ganesa) represents the Brahmanizing process in excelsis. In the spread of the worship of other deities, whether of the standard pentad or of the complex pantheon, sections of Hindu society other than the Brahmins have taken active part.... but the raising of Ganesa to the position of being a component of the pentad is a romance enacted by Brahmins and Brahmins alone."\textsuperscript{44} In spreading Ganesa's influence, the Ganapatya sect of the Brahmins played an important role; the widespread influence of Ganesa in Maharashtra is due to them.\textsuperscript{45}

In this way, Ghurye has shown that the idea of Pentad, of five Gods in Hindu society, is primarily Brahmanic in nature. The Brahmins helped the process of development of these Gods. Not only that, the idea of Pentadic unity is also a specifically Brahmanic attempt to bring synthesis at the social and cultural level. So this description of the evolution of God-heads in Hindu society fits in with Ghurye's central thesis that cultural unity in India has specifically been a result of the Brahmanic endeavours.

\textsuperscript{42} Ghurye thinks that the influence of this Rama-cult has been very extensive in India's socio-cultural history, and he devotes an entire book to this theme. See his \textit{The Legacy of the Ramayana} (Popular, 1979).

\textsuperscript{43} Ghurye - \textit{Gods and Men}, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{44} Ghurye - \textit{Ibid.}, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{45} Ghurye - \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 106-7.
We may take up this thesis for analysis in so far as it is concerned with the origin of different God-heads in Hindu-society. Broadly, Ghurye's conception in this respect may be regarded as one-dimensional. The Indo-Aryans, particularly the Brahmins, according to him, created all these Gods. Even in the acculturation process, they decided how much to accept and what to reject. We think that this is an over-simplified proposition.

Let us take the case of Siva. It is very doubtful whether Rudra-Siva may be regarded as exclusively an Indo-Aryan creation. Firstly, there is clearly in evidence a fear psychosis expressed in the Rigveda while writing about Rudra. Otherwise, how can we explain this saying of Vasistha, "Slay us not, nor abandon us, O Rudra, when thou are angry"? Is it not more reasonable to conclude that the Vedic Aryans began to worship Rudra out of fear? Secondly, in the Vedas, many times Rudra has been associated with the commoners and even with the beasts. As Ghurye himself says, "The association (of Rudra) with charioteers, carpenters, potters and Mickadas and Punjishthas in both Samhitas shows Rudra as a deity of the common people." Taking into consideration this fact, O'Flaherty says, "The earliest mythology of Rudra-Siva reveals a process of assimilation well under way; the dark outsider is already beginning to be included in the Vedic ritual, but he is still regarded warily, worshipped more in fear than in the spirit of devotion ..." Thirdly, archaeological evidences also show that worship of Siva was a part of the cultural trait of the Pre-Indo-Aryan

46 Quoted by Ghurye - Vedic India (1979), p. 119, 122 ff.
Also see Gods and Men, p. 12 ff.
47 Ghurye - Vedic India, pp. 36, 133, 135, 159.
people. We are not in agreement with Ghurye when he says about the Hohenjo-
daro seal that "the so-called ithiphallisn of the figure is almost a fiction". We are more convinced by Marshall's logic when he says that the three-faced male-God of the Seal is "a prototype of the historic Siva". There should be no hesitation regarding the influence of this God on the Vedic Rudra.

The important question is why did the Aryans create so many Gods? Was it not a grand gesture on their part to accommodate different types of cults and faiths? On this aspect Radhakrishnan says, "Hinduism accepted the multiplicity of aboriginal Gods and others which originated most of them outside the Aryan tradition ..... The Aryan also accepted image worship which was a striking feature of the Dravidian faith." Suniti Kumar Chatterjee goes further and says that no less than three-fourth of Indian culture as it grew up through ages and as we find it today, is non-aryan.

This view may be further illustrated with reference to the worship of the mother-Gods. Ghurye is basically right when he says, "The folk-culture and elite-culture in theology at least ..... get integrated in the pentadic complex of Devi". He shows that the various Devis worshipped at the folk level have been accepted and legitimised at the elite level which represents a cultural "amalgam designed to

49 Ghurye - Vedic India, p. 157.
53 Ghurye - Gods and Men, p. 239.
integrate the sentiments of the people around the country and the Brahmanic religious complex."\(^{54}\)

But we have strong reservation when Ghurye says that these Devis have also originally been the creation of the Indo-Aryan people and that these Devis have come into being through their association with the various established Gods of Hindu religion.\(^{55}\) Available evidences show, on the other hand, that this Devi-cult was an established phenomenon among the Indian people long before the coming in of the Aryans. Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro show that some of the fundamental ideas of Hinduism may be traced back to this period. An oblong sealing from Harappa depicts a nude female figure upside down with legs apart and with a plant issuing from her womb. This suggests the idea of an earth Goddess concerned with vegetation.\(^{56}\) Can we not say in this context that the subsequent Aryan identification of Devis with territories, rivers etc,\(^{57}\) may be better explained with reference to this phenomenon? O'Flaherty says, the assimilation of the pro-aryan Devis into the Hindu Pantheon took place in two phases: "first, the Indo-Aryan male-Gods were given wives and then under the influence of Tantric and Saktic movements which had been gaining momentum outside orthodox Hinduism for many centuries, these shadowy female figures emerged as supreme powers ....".\(^{58}\) From the economic standpoint also, it has been argued that the originally pastoral life of the Rgvedic people, was only suitable for the development of patriarchal societies and the idea of male Gods. K.N. Bhattacharyya develops this thesis and says, ".... the


\(^{58}\) W.O'Flaherty - *op.cit.*, p. 238.
conception of a Female Principle which is in most of the cases the reflection of a female dominated society, is incompatible with the patriarchal social organization of the Vedic Aryans. In fact, the Vedas are not the effective sources in which one may seek the origin of the idea of the Female Principle. It is to be sought elsewhere, obviously in the pre-Vedic tradition of India.\textsuperscript{59}

We broadly agree with what Ghurye has said on the process of development of Vishnu as a God-head in Hindu society. His recognition of the importance of the concept of incarnation in Hindu society and his assertion that this "sociology of incarnations" should be analysed in details,\textsuperscript{60} is fully justified. In fact, apart from Ghurye's, there is only one standard work in this field of sociology of incarnation, in so far as it is concerned with Krishna, and it has been done by Milton Singer.\textsuperscript{61}

There is a lot of controversy regarding the historicity of Krishna, regarding his time or regarding the fact whether there was only one Krishna or several Krishnas. An article by Bankim Chandra, the Bengali novelist, written as early as in 1886, is worth mentioning here.\textsuperscript{62} Ghurye's work is not on Indology and not on Krishna as such. His dominating theme is the changing


\textsuperscript{60} Milton Singer - Religious Consciousness (1965), pp. 231-34.

\textsuperscript{61} Ghurye - Religious Consciousness (1965), pp. 231-34.

\textsuperscript{62} cf. The Bengali Article 'Krishna Caritra' by Bankim Chandra - Collected Works (1973), vol. 1, pp. 555-796. There is a volume of literature on this aspect. See, particularly - R.G.Bhandarker - 'Vaishnavism' etc. in Collected Works', vol. IV (Poona), See, also R. Chakraborty - The Story of Krishna in Indian Literature (1976), pp. 5-86.
concept of Godheads in Hindu society and their role in evolving and maintaining the normative structure of Hindu society. His premise that man creates God in his own image and in order to meet the changing demands of time, is sociologically sound. As M.S.A. Rao says, "In his book *Gods and Men* (1962) he (Ghurye) has clearly shown that the 'climate of an age' influences the type of Godhead favoured. He demonstrates that religious ideas are products of newly discovered social interactions and that they are expressions of needs and activities of cultural groups." With his profound knowledge of Indian literary and social history, Ghurye shows how the origin and the decline in importance of God is related with men's social needs. Ghurye's primary theme is that men and society are the makers of God and we think that Ghurye has done justice to his theme.

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ASCETICS AND ASCETICISM IN HINDU SOCIETY

Saints and ascetics have played a very important role in Indian history for a long time. The ideas which asceticism implies viz., the life of renunciation and austerity, have been accepted as the fundamental principles round which Hinduism has evolved. From that standpoint, ascetics and asceticism have been the symbols of what is the best in Hindu society. That is the reason why ascetics played such an important role in Indian religious history. Radhakrishnan has said, "From the beginning of her history, India has adored and idealised not soldiers and statesmen... not even poets and philosophers but those rarer and chastened spirits - time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten everyone else but the saints remain." This popular appeal of asceticism has induced even the politicians of our country to take on an ascetic garb. On this phenomenon, Dutt says, "one who has need to sway the group mind, whether a religious preacher, a social reformer or even a political leader - finds it to his purpose to appear in Samnyasi's likeness in this country, for in that semblance he is able to command the highest respect and the readiest following."

64 S. Radhakrishnan - Eastern Religion and Western Thought, p. 35.
65 S. Dutt - Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India (1962), p. 44.
The importance of asceticism in Hindu religion emanates from another reason. Hinduism has a peculiarity in the sense that it does not have institutional regulation for guiding religious behaviour. Unlike in all other religions, Hinduism has to depend on the spontaneous observance of norms. For the majority of Hindus, there is no necessity of going to any religious centre, as the Muslims are required to go to the mosque or the Christians are to go to the Church. Ghurye is of the opinion that in such a situation, it becomes more difficult for the Hindus to keep their community in fact. Such a task is performed by the ascetics. They act as public teachers. "They have contributed very liberally to the spiritual, intellectual and social uplift of their lay brethren." This explains why ascetics have been given such a high place in Hindu society.

Considering this importance of the ascetic institution, it is very natural that it has received attention of historians and Indologists in our country. A recent contribution in this field is by M.G. Bhagat (Ancient Indian Asceticism, 1976). Asceticism in its modern form has been studied by Oman (Mystics, Saints and Ascetics of India, 1920), Farquhar (Modern Religious Movements in India, 1918) etc. With regard to its ancient form, there are two very revealing studies (Jadunath Sarkar, A History of Dasnami Naga Sampradaya and Sharma, Contributions to the History of Brahmanic Asceticism, 1939). But from the sociological standpoint, Ghurye's work has been the first of its type. Subsequently, another work by B.D. Tripathi, based on a survey of the institution in Uttar Pradesh has come out (Sadhus of India, The Sociological View, 1978).

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66 Based on a personal interview with G.S. Ghurye on 8.1.79.
67 Ghurye - Vedic India, pp. 124-25. For a 'modernist urge' on the part of the ascetics in modern India, see 'Whither India', p. 243.
But Ghurye's work on the Sadhus, it may be said, is most comprehensive and relevant from the sociological standpoint. The dimension and depth of Ghurye's work on Sadhus remains unparalleled even today.

The scope of Ghurye's study is very wide covering the whole gamut of its development from Vedic India to modern times. Ghurye's contention is that those who have left society and have refused normal worldly life, have their own organization, their own society which has come to a meaningful relationship with the larger society. This shows that one cannot escape society by any means. The so-called denial of society is then an affirmation of the importance of society. Ghurye is concerned with the analysis of the social organization of these persons who are supposed to have renounced society.69 Milton Singer has said that Ghurye is concerned here with the social organization of a cultural tradition like Sadhuism.70 Similarly, A.K. Saran has commented, Ghurye "has made another notable departure from current interests in making a study of the 'Indian Sadhus'. It is an excellent sociography of the various sects and religious centres established by the great vedantic philosopher Sankaracharya."71

The behaviour of the Sadhus themselves depend on the nature of organizational control over their activities. Wherever such control has become loose, the institution has been corrupted.72 Ghurye maintains that asceticism, as an institution has become noble, because of its association with monastic organization.73

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73 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 273.
book, where he (Tripathi) has taken a very pessimistic attitude about the future of the institution, Ghurye says that the present maladies are largely organizational in nature and asceticism as such has not lost its social relevance.\(^{74}\)

Again, as a sociologist, Ghurye has not failed to note that the society of ascetics bears a direct impact of the norms and regulations which are prevalent in Hindu caste-based society. Some of the ascetic orders have gotra affiliation. Each monastic order of the Dasnami Sampradayas has a gotra of its own.\(^{75}\) Tripathi has also testified to this existence of gotra among the Dasnami.\(^{76}\) The all-pervading caste feeling is also present among the Sadhus. No one else but a Brahmin is allowed to cook and serve the meals at any ascetic centre. Even those sects which began by challenging caste distinctions have sooner or later accepted it.\(^{77}\)

Tripathi also says, 'The present study reveals that even Kabir and Dadu sects have begun to take pride in recruiting members of the upper varnas into their folds'.\(^{78}\) So the social factor has always to be kept into mind in understanding this ascetic institution.

Ghurye maintains that asceticism and monastic organisations are two unique contributions which Indian society has made to the common stock of culture. Buddhism and Jainism, the former in particular, organized ascetics into regular monastic orders. Monastic organization,

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\(^{74}\) Foreword to B.D. Tripathi - Sadhus of India: The Sociological View (1978).
\(^{75}\) Ghurye - op.cit., pp. 85-86.
\(^{76}\) B.D. Tripathi - op.cit., See Chart III facing p. 64.
\(^{77}\) Ghurye - op.cit., p. 228.
\(^{78}\) B.D. Tripathi - op.cit., p. 85.
therefore, is specifically a Buddhist contribution to the world.\textsuperscript{79} Even the Christian ascetic-idea and its monastic organization was influenced and inspired by Buddhist asceticism.\textsuperscript{80}

But though monachical organization became widespread among the Buddhists, it was only Sankaracharyya who introduced it among the Hindus in the 8th or 9th century A.D. From that time onwards, asceticism and monastic organization have been accepted as widespread principles of Hindu religious organization. The sectarian structure of the Hindu ascetics may be divided into two broad categories, the Saiva ascetics with Sankaracharya as their Guru and the Vaishnava ascetics with Ramanuja as their founder.

Jadunath Sarkar says, "The entire course of Hindu life and thought after the age of Buddhism has been dominated by the influence of two intellectual giants and made to flow in two nearly allied channels which were laid down in their teachings. Between them they have divided the empire of Hindu philosophy and religious organization .... These two directors of Hindu religious thought as we know it today are Sankaracharya and Ramanuja.\textsuperscript{81}

The Sanyasis or Saiva ascetics have been divided by Wilson and by Oman into four categories, viz. (1) Dasnami; (2) Dansis; (3) Paramhansas and (4) Brahmacaris.\textsuperscript{82} But Ghurye does not accept the

\textsuperscript{79} There is a lot of literature on the subject. See, in particular Sukumar-Dutt - 1) Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India (London, 1962); 2) Early Buddhist Monachism (Asia Publishing, 1960); N. Dutt - 1) Early Monastic Buddhism (Calcutta, 1971), vols. I & II; 2) Development of Buddhism in U.F. (Lucknow, 1956); D. Bhagwat - Early Buddhist Jurisprudence (Poona, 1939).

\textsuperscript{80} Ghurye - op.cit., pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{81} J. Sarkar - A History of Dasnami Naga Sampradayas (Allahabad), pp. 1-2.

validity of this distinction. On the basis of Ghurye’s discussion, we can make the following classification of the Saiva ascetics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAIVA ASCETICS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dasnamis</td>
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<td>__________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earlier Sect</td>
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<td>__________________</td>
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<td>Pashupatas</td>
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The most important sect of ascetics among the Saivites are Dasnamis, which was founded by Sankaracharya. In organizing the ascetics and in establishing four monastic centres in four different parts of India, viz., Badri, Dwaraka, Sringeri and Puri, Sankaracharya did an invaluable job for the cause of the revival of Hinduism and the restoration of India’s cultural unity. Ghurye is of the opinion that Sankaracharya saved Hinduism from virtual rout by establishing these centres. And Jadunath Sarkar says, "What Sankara and his disciples did was to combine the scattered atoms of individual

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83 See, Ghurye - *Social Tensions in India* (1968) for a historical background of Sankaracharya, pp. 152-68.
84 Ghurye - *Indian Sadhus*, pp. 82-97.
ascetics known in India from the Vedic age or even before, and place them together under regular discipline and the control of a central authority."85

The Dasnami Nagas are somewhat different from the Dasnamis because the former are armed Sanyasis and have a tradition of going naked. J.N. Farquhar notes that the Dasnami Naga Sampradayas were organized by Madhusudan Sarasvati in the 16th century to protect the sect against increasing onslaught of the Muslims. But it appears that these fighting Sanyasis are much older and they can be traced back as early as in the 13th century.86 Anyway, this class of fighting Sanyasis has exercised tremendous influence not only upon our religious history but also upon our political history.

The Jogis are the third sect among the Saiva ascetics. Popularly they are known as Tantrik Sanyasis and their approach is magical. The Pashupata and the Kapalika sects among the Jogis may be traced back to a very old date.87 The Kapalikas became very powerful during the medieval period, particularly in Bengal. In the 12th century, Gorakhnath organized these Jogis. Nathpanthis are those who are full followers of Gorakhnath whereas the Aghorpanthis have certain minor points of distinction with them. Among the Jogis, the influence of Islam is very important. The chief of a Nathpanthi akhada is known as the Pir. They erect tombs for ancestor worship and establish akhadas by the side of them. Ghurye admits that these practices closely correspond those of

85 J. Sarkar - op.cit., p. 51.
86 J. Sarkar - Ibid., p. 90.
87 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 116.
88 Ghurye - Ibid., p. 129.
the Muslims but he avers that this was a tactical device to avoid the wrath of the Muslim rulers.

There are some other Saiva ascetics who have been termed as Reformist Sanyasis. Two principal sects among them are the Udasis and the Nirmalas. They carry at an extreme level the trait of non-Hindu influence which we have noticed in case of the Jogis. The Nirmalas, for example, have an almost revolutionary slogan that the Purana and the Koran, that Ram and Rahim are one. But Ghurye does not go deep into the causes of these reforms.

As distinguished from the Saiva ascetics, the Vaishnavas are more mass-oriented and less elitistic in character. Shudras and Women are included among them in a larger proportion. There are four sects among the Vaishnavas known as catuh Sampadaya and they are: 1) the Nimbarka sect; 2) the Vishnu swami-Vallabhachari sect; 3) the Madhva Sampradaya and 4) the Ramanandi Sampradaya. Ghurye notes that sect-identification has been an important way of gaining respectability in Indian religious history. The Chaityavaites, for example, from the standpoint of the number of their following and the area of influence, could easily have formed a different sect but they did not do it and identified themselves with the Madhva sect. But though the major sects remain unchanged, within each sect there are numerous subdivisions which prove the fertility of religious thinking in India.

89 For a complete list of the various sects of Saiva ascetics, see B.D. Tripathi - Sadhus of India (1978), pp. 60-80.
90 See, Tripathi - op.cit., Table 3 on p. 84 on this point.
91 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 158.
92 Ghurye - Ibid., p. 164.
The relationship between the Vaishnavas and the Bhakti-cult is very close. About the Bhakti-cult, Renou comments that in Hinduism "there is no sect without some element of Bhakti". Ghurye also enters into a detailed discussion about this aspect of Hindu religion and shows that essentially the Bhakti-cult arose at the time of the Bhagavad Gita. But whereas the Bhakti-complex of the Gita had both moral and intellectual connotations, that which arose at a later period was 'amoral and almost non-intellectual'. But the underlying tone of equality and humanism are present although. And in so far as Vaishnavism inherits this tradition, it has got a tremendous popular appeal in every age. Milton Singer has shown that even in a modern industrial and urban centre (Madras), the Radha-Krsna cult attracts thousands of persons though there has been a change from ritualistic to devotional aspect of religion today.

But though Ghurye has given a succinct account of this phenomenon, he has failed to analyse the social roots and consequences of Bhakti movement. To what extent did the humanistic and equalitarian contents of the movement challenge the traditional hierarchy? And why did the influence of Vaishnavism decline subsequently in our society?

Max Weber noted that in India there is a general tendency that rebel sects emerge, develop and then devolve back into the system. Nehru also lamented, 'Rebels against caste have drawn many followers, and yet in the

93 L. Renou - Religions of Ancient India (1953), p. 93.
95 Ghurye - Religious Consciousness, p. 278; Social Tensions in India, pp. 175-86.
97 For a brilliant analysis of some of these aspects, R. Chakraborty - 'Some Social Results of the Chaitanya Movement' in Socialist Perspective (Sept & Dec. 1976), pp. 39-61.
course of time their group has itself become a caste'. The reasons behind this phenomenon have not been discussed by Ghurye.

Regarding Ghurye's analysis of the origin, development and role of asceticism in India, it is undeniable that Ghurye filled in a vital gap by his writings in the field of asceticism. Hindu religion has largely grown around this institution. Ghurye's recognition of the sociological relevance of the institution and his thesis, that though the ascetics have 'renounced' society, they operate as part of society— all these are very sound propositions. But there are some other aspects on which Ghurye's views are either inadequate or unacceptable.

First of all, let us take the question of the origin of asceticism. Ghurye holds that asceticism is an Indo-Aryan contribution to Indian culture. But, on the other hand, archaeological evidences and analysis of the traits of non-aryan culture show that the Aryans took this culture-trait from the pre-aryan inhabitants of India. Oldenberg says, "the practice of tapas which lies in the midst of the Vedic ritual is a relic of bygone days." Among the indigenous non-aryans, there were some institutions corresponding to it. Bhagat points out, "this practice was a trait associated with the medicine-man called the Shaman by the primitive peoples. According to Schweitzer, the Rgvedic muni was the Shaman and medicine man later called the Yogi". That the munis or the ascetics were popularly believed to have possessed this magical

99 J. Nehru - The Discovery of India (1946), p. 112.
100 H. Oldenberg - Ancient India, its Language and Religions (1962), p. 83.
power, had been accepted even in the *Rgveda*. 102 Again, will it be too irrational to conclude that the Buddhists, because they were anti-Brahmins, did not use the term *munis* but *shramana* as a mark of protest? It may be said here that Ghurye’s preoccupation with Hindu ascetic organisation has prevented him from looking into the other types of ascetic organisations prevalent in India, particularly the Buddhist monastic organisation. 103

Secondly, Ghurye’s discussion of the process of growth of ascetic organisations leaves much to be desired from the sociological standpoint. The development of these organisations has not been discussed in the context of the age in which they developed nor has it been shown how they created their impact upon the larger society. Why was it that the *Kabirpanthi* and *Dadupanthi* among the *Vaishnavites* and the *Jaina* and *Nirmalas* among the *Saivas* extended their ranks to Muslims or why was it that Goraknath attempted to bring cultural synthesis between the Hindus and the Muslims? Ghurye has explained away this phenomenon by saying that it was a contrivance 'to escape utter annihilation at the hands of the Muslims'. 104 But we have to view the development of these sects in their proper historical context. The process signified growing cultural synthesis between the Hindus and the Muslims. This started around the 14th century. Dr. Tara Chand says that religious leaders of this period "deliberately rejected certain elements of ancient creeds and emphasized others and thus attempted to bring about an approximation between the

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102 Ghurye - *Vedic India* (1979), P. 125.
103 This is the principal charge of M.G. Bhagat against Ghurye. See, M.G. Bhagat - *op. cit.*, P. 7.
104 Ghurye - *Indian Sadhus*, P. 139 ; *Social Tensions in India*, P. 198.
Ghurye has traced the Bhakti-cult back to the Bhagat-Gita. But the Bhagat-Gita, as Kosambi says, is a confluence of many doctrines and faiths. So it is to be explained why a particular faith which was enunciated in the Gita lay dormant for more than thousand years and was resuscitated at a particular period and not at another.

The social bases of these ascetic orders are also important considerations which one has to take into account. Historically, the Vaishnabites have come mainly from the poorer sections whereas the Saivites have been drawn from the rich and affluent sections. So this sectarian division had something to do with economic organisation of society. Kosambi says, "That Sankara's activity provided a stimulus to their abolition (Buddhists), and Ramanuja's some handle against the wealthier Barons whose worship of Siva was associated in the popular mind with their oppressive land rent, seems a reasonable conclusion on the evidence before us. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain why the richer, aristocratic landholders opted for Siva, the poorer and relatively Plebian overwhelmingly for Vishnu in the bitter Smarta-Vaishnava feuds. It is difficult to believe that they could come to blows because of differing religious philosophy."

From this comes the political role of these sects. Ghurye's statement that their political involvement is a recent phenomenon, can not be accepted. The Naga sects, in particular, have deeply involved

105 Tara Chand - Influence of Islam on Indian Culture (1956), pp. 87-89.
106 Ghurye - Social Tensions in India, pp. 175-186; Religious Consciousness, pp. 274-278.
themselves with the secular world. Prof. Sarkar has proved this phenomenon elaborately in relation to the Saivas and has shown that the alignment or hostility of the Naga sanyasis had become vital factors in deciding the course of political events.¹⁰⁹ We think that it would be most fascinating to unfold this aspect of our religious organization. It is not quite strange that today the Sadhus are organizing Ram Rajya Parishad or Hindu Mahasabha or that the Bharat Sadhu Samaj is organizing a special session at the time of Kumbh Mela which is being addressed by the Prime Minister.¹¹⁰ History bears sufficient proof that the Sadhus have never alienated themselves completely from the secular and the political world.