

**BRAHMA, VISHNU AND MAHESH AS ROLE MODEL TO ASHRAM SYSTEM****Amey Pingle***Crux View Center, Jalna road, Akashwani, Ch. Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra.***Chinmay Choudhari***Crux View Center, Jalna road, Akashwani, Ch. Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra.  
choudhari.chinmay.242010@gmail.com***Sudarshan Loya***Crux View Center, Jalna road, Akashwani, Ch. Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra.***Abstract**

*This paper looks into the significance of the Ashram system in Hindu philosophy, which outlines four stages of life: Brahmacharya (student life), Grihastha (householder life), Vanaprastha (retirement), and Sanyasa (renunciation). Each stage is intricately linked to the roles of the Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva and Omkar — representing creation, preservation, and transformation, respectively. This text illustrates how these stages guide individuals in fulfilling their duties and achieving spiritual growth throughout their lives. Brahmacharya emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge and discipline, akin to Brahma's creative role. Grihastha, the most crucial stage, focuses on maintaining family and societal responsibilities, resonating with Vishnu's role as the preserver of life. Vanaprastha signifies a transition into retirement, encouraging individuals to assist the next generation while reflecting on mortality, paralleling Shiva's transformative nature. Sanyasa represents the ultimate goal of Moksha, where one renounces material desires to pursue spiritual liberation. This highlights the importance of role models in embodying these stages, suggesting that the deities serve as ideal examples for individuals navigating their life paths. It emphasizes the relevance of the Ashram system in contemporary society, advocating for a disciplined youth, responsible adulthood, gradual detachment from material pursuits, and a focus on spiritual fulfilment in later years.*

**Keywords:** Ashram System, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Role, Dharma

**Introduction**

Human beings have always been bogged down with one question: Purpose of human life. Some humans take this questions very seriously, while others may take it with ease. However, in any case a system is needed to travel the path of life so that human beings live in just society. In order to create this system it is utmost importance to create functions and path for all humans. The same is done using the system of ashram or various stages of life.

Ashrams are stages of life as described by early Hindu texts (R. K. Sharma, 1997; Widgery, 1930). There are four types of Ashramas according to the person's age or work (Flood, 2008; Vivekjivandas, 2010; Walters, 2016). Ashrams are not really linked to age but generally falls in those ages of human life. Ashrams are divided in following four categories.

**Brahmacharya:** - Life of student (Usually start with Upnayan Sanskara to day of graduation. From age of 5 to 25 years old)

**Grihastha:** - Life of married life (Starts with marriage and ends with birth of granddaughter or grandson. From 25 years to 50 years old)

**Vanaprastha:** - Life of retirement (To help the next generation by working with them in settling in their Grihasti. From 50 years to 70 years old)

**Sannyasa:** - Life of Renunciation (To grow internal peace and help society by doing selfless deeds. From 70 to death)

However, to teach about this ashrams, there need to be role model. Since, such role models are not available in scriptures for all the Ashrams, this paper dwells into possibility of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as the role model.

**Connection of Trimurti with Ashramas**

The Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh) symbolizes creation preservation and destruction (Mukherjee, S. N., 2013; B. N. K. Sharma, 2008; Sutton, 2000). Many people have linked the symbolism of god to various factors, but linking them to ashram system may provide a better reference point.

**Brahmacharya (student life):** This stage focuses on learning akin to brahma's role as the creator laying the foundation for life.

**Grihastha (Householder life):** This stage involves maintaining family and societal responsibilities, resonating with Vishnu's role as the preserver.

**Vanaprastha (Retirement):** This stage is about detachment and preparation for renunciation, reflecting Shiva's transformative and destructive aspects.

**Sannyasa (Renunciation):** This final stage emphasizes spiritual liberation, transcending the material world, aligning with the ultimate goal of Moksha.

**Brahmacharya Ashrama**

This is the first stage of the four Ashramas. Brahmacharya means "on the path of Brahman"

(Pandey, 2006; R. K. Sharma, 1997). Brahmacharya has a deep meaning, indicating a lifestyle conducive to the pursuit of sacred knowledge and spiritual liberation. This includes cleanliness, simple living, studies, meditation, and restraints on sexual behaviour. Brahma is a noun distinguished from the masculine Brahmins. The thought behind this Ashrama was to command the thought of a child of that age.

The picture of Brahma gives more representation about this ashram. Brahma has four heads suggesting that a student should learn from all direction and perspective. He is sitting with Maa Saraswati and creating a new universe every time, just like a student do when they are sitting with a teacher.

Brahma is showed to be created from the "Nabhi" or navel of Vishnu, meaning the next generation is born from the grihasti and collaboration of Vishnu (male) and Laxmi (female). When a student learn new things, they may get arrogant or egoistic about their knowledge. It is the job of Shiva (Older people) to cut the head of ego without destroying the confidence of younger ones.

A student should not be praised too much for his or her achievement and may be for the same reason, brahma is not worshipped directly. Body of Brahma is young, but his head is showed to be that of older person. This suggests, that students should be fit but must have calmness for better learning.

#### **Grihastha Ashrama**

This is the second stage of Ashramas. Grihastha means "householder" or "being occupied by a married life". This stage of Ashrama which studies life stage of married life. Grihastha Ashrama is the most important Ashrama as Denoted by texts of Hinduism. This is the stage where a man or a woman pursues 3 of the 4 goals of life, which are Dharma (duties), Artha (wealth, health), and Kama (relationships, emotions). This is similar to Vishnu, the god of preservation.

Like Vishnu takes various form and perform his role on earth, married man must also do the same. Sometimes, he has to be small like Vaman avatar and get his work done from much bigger king. Sometimes, they need to bow to pressure of family life and create a new beginning like that of Lord Rama.

Sometimes human being have to be cunning but smart to understand their role in various scenario like shri Krishna in Mahabharata. Sometimes, they may become angry beyond a point and innocence of child may help them calm down like that of lord Narsimha. Sometimes, they may work in quiet and perform their duties even though they may be strongest like that of Matsya Avtaar. Sometimes,

they may carry the weight of mountain on their back but still remain silent and do their work like that in Kurm Avtaar.

In all scenarios, a loving wife like Laxmi can make the life really beautiful and happy. May be the symbolism showed in Lord Vishnu sitting under 1000 poisonous head of sheshnaga but still being peaceful with the help of Maa laxmi represents the same.

#### **Vanaprastha Ashrama**

This is the third stage of four Ashramas. Vanaprastha means 'forest dweller or forest road'. This stage of Ashrama starts with a person handing over household responsibilities to next generation. This accurately reflects lord Shiva's role being transformative.

When a person nears the age of retirement, they are expected to be calmer and understand the fleeting role of life. Shiva's calmness and being happy in any stage represents the ashram in more apt way. Shiva is showed to not care about surrounding and not carry any ego even though being all powerful and all knowing. A person around the age of retirement is expected to do the same.

Shiva is married to Maa Parvati, which carries nine forms in various ways. This nine forms represent nine parts of married aged women. Sometimes she is loving mother like Skandmata. Sometimes, she may want to feed a lot of people and have feast at house like Annapurna. Sometimes, she may remember her father's house and stories with it like Maa Shailputri. Sometimes she may be calm and happy as Maa Chadraghanta and sometimes she may be angry and raging like Maa kali. Sometimes she is powerful Maa Mahagauri.

In any case, a person must know how to handle her like Shiva without getting agitated and keeping a happy atmosphere in the house. Like Shiva handled Karthikeya and Ganapati, one must handle the teenage of their children and understanding their nature. In this age, one must create and teach knowledge like Shiva and not be arrogant about it.

#### **Sanyas Ashrama**

This is the fourth and last stage of existence or Ashrama. Sanyasa is a form of asceticism by renunciation of material desires. It's exemplified by a state of disinterest and detachment from material life, with purpose of spending one's life in peaceful spiritual pursuits. This stage also centres on Moksha. At this stage, one must renounce everything and be like Omkar. A person who is in this world without being part of the world. At this stage, one must think of only helping the society and live their personal life behind. This stage follow the word Omkar in real sense.

## Conclusion

The concept of Ashramas—the four stages of life in Hindu philosophy—serves as a structured guide to living a balanced and purposeful life. Each stage—Brahmacharya (student life), Grihastha (householder life), Vanaprastha (hermit life), and Sannyasa (renunciation)—reflects a progressive evolution of an individual's duties and spiritual growth. These stages are deeply rooted in the philosophy of Dharma (duty), Artha (prosperity), Kama (desires), and ultimately Moksha (liberation), forming a holistic framework for personal and societal well-being.

In contemporary times, while the rigid application of Ashramas has evolved, the underlying wisdom remains relevant. The principles encourage a disciplined youth, responsible adulthood, gradual detachment from materialistic pursuits, and a focus on spiritual fulfillment in later years. Understanding and integrating these stages into modern life can help individuals lead a balanced existence, harmonizing personal, familial, and societal responsibilities. Thus, the Ashrama system continues to offer timeless insights into human development and ethical living.

For living in modern world, one need to learn from the god we worshipped and learn from their nature and form.

## References

1. Flood, G. (Ed.). (2008). The Blackwell companion to Hinduism. Blackwell Pub. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998694>
2. Mukherjee, S. N. (2013). Mahabharata: An Ideal Itihasa (History) of Ancient India. Sydney Studies in Society and Culture, 11.
3. Pandey, R. (2006). Hindu Samskāras: Socio-religious study of the Hindu sacraments (2nd rev. ed). Motilal Banarsidass.
4. Sharma, B. N. K. (2008). History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and its literature: From the earliest beginnings to our own times (3. rev. ed., reprint). Motilal Banarsidass.
5. Sharma, R. K. (1997). Indian society: Institutions and change. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
6. Sutton, N. (2000). Religious doctrines in the Mahābhārata (1. ed). Motilal Banarsidass.
7. Vivekjavandas, S. (2010). Hinduism. Part 2 (J. Dave, Ed.; 1st edition). Swaminarayan Aksharpith.
8. Walters, J. D. (2016). The Hindu Way of Awakening: Its Revelation, Its Symbol: An Essential View of Religion. Crystal Clarity Publishers.
9. Widgery, A. (1930). The Principles of Hindu Ethics. JSTOR, 40(2), 14.